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The Mysteries of the Court of Napoleon III

by

Gilbert Augustin Thierry

Illustrated

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MYSTERIES

OF THE

COURT OF NAPOLEON III

TASTARELLA

THE LIBRARY OF CHOICE FICTION

MYSTERIES OF THE COURT

OF

NAPOLEON III

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF GILBERT AUGUSTIN-THIERRY

BY

E. I. R. AND M. A. B.

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TO MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE,
FRANCIS CHEVASSU

One day I heard a Chief of Police under the Second Empire, tell the mysterious and sensational adventure which is here narrated.

I dare make it the subject of my novel; but I thought best to disguise the names of the different personages who have taken part in this, alas, too true a story.

TO THE READER

The present volume is the first of a series of studies, in which I wish to portray the men and events of the Second Empire.

I dare say, some of my readers, those who know how to read between the lines, will recognize La Savelli, the Prince of Carpegna, the Count Besnard, and especially that enigmatic personage, the State-Minister.

But forgetfulness, that true shroud, common to us all, has so long hidden them from view: they are no more, neither for love, nor hate. So we may, without harming any one, restore them to life for the time being. Besides, I claim that the Historical Romance has a right to call back to life for an instant ghosts that form a part of History.

As for me, I have served that Empire; I have respected it, thinking it was glorious; I have lamented its fall. Faithful to my youthful illusions, I did undertake the pilgrimage to that lonely Chiselhurst where he who loved France so unwisely sleeps the sleep of exiled kings. I looked dreamily on this lonely sepulcher, and before this forlorn tomb I had a clear vision of the Irreparable.

This is more than sufficient evidence that the following pages are neither an apology nor a malicious attack.

THE AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE

BELLA

MYSTERIES

OF THE

COURT OF NAPOLEON III

IT was dark; a heavy mist was spreading over the city of London—it was a mild, rainy evening in April. That year—1854—the early spring had caused the orchards to bloom, and make almost sunny, humid England, that land where, as an old madrigal has it, "So green are the lawns, so blonde the hair, so blue the gentle eyes, so rosy the smiles."

At the gilded tower of Westminster Abbey, the big clock had just struck seven, and the busy noises were quieting down. Around St. Paul, the buzzing city was getting benumbed; the Fleet street banker was closing his office, happy at the thought of "sweet, sweet home." In the Strand the gas was being lighted, and already from Haymarket to Oxford street the superb show windows of the jewelers and silversmiths were brilliantly illuminated. A little while longer and the lawns of St. James'

Park would be invaded by the numerous homeless vagabonds who sleep outdoors. In Regent street, on the left towards the Circus, the Restaurant Arditti, an Italian resort with a festive fame, was noticeable, being brilliantly lighted, and apparently well patronized. As usual its private rooms were full of couples *en bonne fortune*—questionable men and women, who, doubtless, emptied many a bottle in the course of an evening. British fashion!

On that particular night one of the private rooms on the first floor was occupied by a very different kind of a couple: two men sat at a table, anxious and quiet.

One of them was about forty years old; tall and strong, he had long brown hair, and wore a thick beard; but his miserable, threadbare garments spoke of hard times: he looked like one of those starving professors of literature or music, who, from all parts of the world, invade the city of London, though its steps are hard to climb, and its bread, so arrogantly given, cruelly hurts the receiver's mouth.

Just now, he was busy eating large mouthfuls of ham, roast beef, oxtail, etc.—the dainties of any English palace. Beer and Moselle wine were also gulped down the throat of the silent eater. The other, almost an old man, was looking at the big eater, and scarcely touched the viands spread before him. This one was a

gentleman; his face was carefully shaved, his bald head had a crown of gray hair, and his dress was irreproachable in cut and texture. With his black coat and white cravat, he looked like an archdeacon giving praise, in convivial company, to the Almighty for having created the grapevine. But the brightness of his eyes, his bronzed complexion and lively gestures told of foreign birth.

"*Per Bacco!*" the hairy man said, with a heavy sigh; "*Che pranza! Oh! veramente stupenda.*"

"Pardon me, Marino," said the other, interrupting him; "the waiter in attendance is an Italian; let us talk in French, and be prudent."

The ragged man bowed, without interrupting his occupation.

"Then it is something serious, my Lord?"

"Yes, very serious, my dear fellow."

"*Ebbene!* Let us speak French, then, though it be a nasal, semibarbaric jargon, as our great Alfieri has so rightly named it. Ah! how comfortable I feel here: a cuisine worthy of Apicius, wine which would have enchanted Horace, and the most generous Mecenas smiling on me! Then," added he, lowering his voice, "here, at least, are no spies, no police, none of the horrors of Monsieur Bonaparte's police. Ah! this Monsieur Bonaparte!"

The man began again picking at his plate,

his stomach certainly making a provision for the next day.

"Have you received any news from the gentlemen of the 'Young Italy?'" abruptly asked the old man, the one whom Marino called "my Lord!" He had pronounced those words with a sneering and disdainful tone.

"None," replied his companion. "Complete silence, *dunque* great designs."

"Or, rather, great apostasy, you simpleton."

"Oh! my Lord!"

"You, young men of this generation, do you ever read the magazines published in Switzerland or Germany? No? Well, your Mazzini is writing again. He not only borrows money from people, but boldly plunders their thoughts; it is a new wrinkle in his banditism. Now, as I said, the illustrious Joseph has begun to write. Oh! what a cursed hypocrite! Liberty with Christ; freedom through the gospel, etc., etc. —a wretched imitation of Gioberti. The Vatican is probably going to send him his benediction. *Amen!* I say it again, it is downright apostasy!"

Marino straightened up, and, in an emphatic tone, he cried: "Renegade! He, Rome's deliverer—its glorious defender? Never!"

"And what about me?" his Lordship retorted, and rising excitedly, threw his napkin on the table. "Was I not there also during

the siege of Rome? Was I not a member of your Parliament and a soldier at the service of Italy? I was not spouting speeches, it is true; I was fighting behind the Portese barricade, covered with wounds, and gasping for breath."

"Oh! Certainly, certainly," said Marino, trying to calm his excitement; "your Lordship has behaved nobly. A hero worthy of old times—a Coclès, a second Mars, a knight deserving a place in the Capitol."

"You must be mistaken, my dear, since your Mazzinians reject me; I am in their eyes, it seems, a worthless man, a coward and a traitor. Yes, a traitor! This word has already been applied to me. I know it. Ungrateful country!"

"Pshaw! Countries are all ungrateful! But as Pasta, the divine, used to sing, *Dolce ingrata patria*—ungrateful but nevertheless so dear!"

A profound silence followed this quotation, and the "knight worthy of the Capitol" lay down on a divan. After a while, he asked:

"But tell me, yes or no, have you received any news?"

"Well, yes; I have," said Marino, coming near, with a mysterious manner. "Do you remember a man who used to serve under you in the Legion of the Reds—a tall, brave fellow, a man called Pianori?"

The answer came unhesitatingly:

"No. Upon my word, I know nothing—nothing about him at all."

Just at that moment, the piercing voice of a newsboy reached their ears. It cried:

"*Evening papers!* Important dispatch from France!"

At the same time a rumor was coming up from Regent street.

The newsboy continued shouting: "Dastardly attack on the French Emperor!"

The Italians looked at each other; and his Lordship rushed to the bell. A waiter came in.

"Quick! quick! go and buy a paper for me!"

The freshly printed sheet was soon in the old man's hands; it read as follows:

"Last dispatch. Paris, 5 P. M.—To-day in the avenue of the Champs-Elysées, a man named Pianori fired three shots at the Emperor, but failed to wound him. The assassin was rescued by the police from the hands of the crowd, who was about tearing him to pieces, and had almost succeeded in doing so. No other details up to going to press."

Below the dispatch sent from France, were numerous telegrams from Italy.

His Lordship read:

"Naples, 10 A. M.—Last night at the Theater San Carlo was given for the first time the new ballet, *Women and Flowers.* The hall was

crowded ; the audience enthusiastic. The dancers were recalled seven times."

The man dropped the paper, and the former member of the Roman Parliament fell heavily on a chair. He looked down as if he was deeply ashamed and in utter despair. His voice was low, and tears came to his eyes as he said, almost stammering :

"Another victim! Is our blood always to flow ? And while we suffer, Italy is singing, dancing and making love. Oh ! how despicable ! Ah ! nation without a conscience, if such is thy destiny, let it be !"

He struck the table with his fist :

"As for me, I have enough of it. I am tired of my endless exile, of tramping all over the world, hunted like a wild beast by the police. Ah ! gentlemen of the Young Italy, you have nothing but scorn for my white hair ! Be it so. Henceforth this white hair will no longer bow before you ! *Finita la Commedia!* I regain my liberty !"

" What liberty ? " asked Marino, trying hard to smile.

" I will be my own self again, and have only one master—myself ! "

He had left his chair now, and kept walking to and fro, gesticulating angrily, his own words increasing his wrath.

" Yes, it is decided ! To-morrow I shall write

to the Cardinal Secretary of State. I knew Signor Antonelli formerly, and——"

"What! You, write to that man!"

"Yes; to him. I shall ask for pardon, and I know I shall get it. I will be like those other men—*O Romagnuoli tornati in bastardi!*"

He lighted a cigar, and again lay down on the divan; then, closing his eyes as he puffed the smoke toward the ceiling, he added:

"At last, I am going to see you again, my beloved Ravenna, my own dear city; and you, too, my palace of La Porta Serrata, abandoned so long. Ah! fortunate Italy thinks of nothing but pleasure. All right! let us *all* be merry, then. No more politics, no more sentimental nonsense, no more suffering! No; let pleasure be boundless; let it be an endless masquerade; a carnival without any Lent to mar its gayety! Besides, I am tired of living alone; I have a great mind to try marriage."

"Marriage!" gently sighed Marino, who approached the divan, and sat down. "Your Lordship forgets his sixty and odd years."

The old man raised his head a little:

"Sixty-three, Mr. Musician; and I don't forget the total! So, I intend to make a match worthy of the morals of my country! I will go behind the scenes at the Theater of San Carlo, or choose a star among the dancers of *La Scala!*"

"Your Lordship is joking!"

"I never joke."

"And what will the portraits of your ancestors say? Those great *Condottiere* who have died for honor's sake, and who, in your palace, will look down at your Lordship, day and night?"

With one bound, the old man straightened himself up, and, turning pale, walked towards the window, and opened it roughly; anger was choking him. Marino followed him, and leaned against the balcony.

In the street in front of the restaurant a crowd was gathering. A band of those musicians, who are real vermin in London, were giving a sidewalk concert. Two violins squeaked, a harp, out of tune, accompanied them; and above all those discords, a woman was singing the "Brindisi" of *La Traviata*, that tune so popular on account of its very vulgarity.

"Pretty voice," said Marino, "but no culture. Ah! if I had given her lessons!"

"Say! pretty one. Say, little one," cried his Lordship, "here is a shilling for you. Take it. Now, come up here and sing for us."

The girl looked up, finished her song, and entered the house; a few minutes later, she was ushered into the private dining room.

She was, indeed, a superb creature—a tall,

youthful, dark complexioned Italian woman, with large, soft eyes and luxuriant hair fastened with a gold pin. Her features reminded one of those beautiful maidens of the Transtevere, made almost divine by the brush of the Sanzio. She was strangely dressed in a red skirt, bought probably at a second-hand store, near the Covent-Garden Theater. To her waist, she had pinned a bouquet of artificial wild roses.

Standing smilingly in the middle of the room, the street songstress looked boldly at the two men, displaying her pearl-white teeth. However, she did not hesitate very long, but turning her velvety eyes towards the man in the black suit, she said in French:

"Here I am, sir. What shall I sing for you? The *Santa Lucia?* But you have no piano to accompany me."

His Lordship had put on his eyeglasses, and scrutinizing her as a connoisseur, said:

"That's a fact. What! You speak French, my dear?"

"Certainly. My father was a teacher in Marseille."

"You were born in France, then?"

"No; in Rome."

"Daughter of a teacher, eh? Indeed! A learned woman, then?"

"Yes; I know everything. I even know enough to ignore what one should not know."

And laughing, she looked attentively at the two men, who were also laughing.

His Lordship went on, pointing at the flowers pinned on her dress:

"You are not quite so wild as your flowers, then?"

"And especially not so withered," she added, mockingly.

"Give me the little bunch, my beauty."

"Never! It is a charm."

"Against the evil eye?"

"Yours is not such a very good one. No; I like these wild roses; my father was fond of them."

"A pretty phrase. I approve of the sentiment. And what is your sweet name?"

"Bella."

"That is the name you go by, I suppose; but what is your real one—the one God gave you?"

"God!" said the singer, shrugging her shoulders.

"What! a free thinker? A strange case, indeed!"

Bella seemed to hesitate; but suddenly falling into a serious mood, she said:

"You are Italians; I see it. Well, my name is Rosina Savelli."

She pronounced that name with the same pride as if she had said, "my name is Falcon,

or Malibran." She, no doubt, expected to produce a sensation; and she did.

"Savelli!" exclaimed his Lordship. "I used to know, during the siege of Rome by the French, a certain Scipione Savelli; he was fighting under my command, and was wounded on the ramparts. He was a brave fellow."

"He was my father."

"Your father! Oh! pardon me, then, Signorina Savelli! You bring back to me sad remembrances. Yours is a name written in the martyrology for holy Liberty! Savelli! one of the victims, I think, of that man Bonaparte."

The woman turned deathly pale; her eyes glared, while she answered in an altered voice:

"They have shot him twice! He was my father."

"Shot him twice! The wretches! But where and how was this abominable crime committed?"

"In Provence, after the *coup d' état*, during the great Insurrection in the South."

"I see—I remember; several leaders of 'Young Italy' fought also in the ranks of the French Republicans, and fell like heroes. It was for the sake of our vain hopes—folly!"

"Folly, perhaps, but sublime folly! My father had the command of a band of Republicans in the Var. O! yes, sir; my father was brave! He was a devoted lover of liberty; his

heart was burning for his beloved Italy—this pitiful abode of grief! How he hated this Bonaparte, the besieger of Rome, the supporter of the Pope and the priest! He had formerly known that man, a 'Carbonaro,' like himself, both conspiring for the same object. The vile renegade! And so, Savelli was ready to fight. At the first call he gave up his pupils, his friends, left Marseille and hurried to join his companions in arms. He was captured on a barricade, and immediately shot. Those soldiers were brutes! But death refused to take him; he was not killed. Perforated with bullets but still breathing, they threw him into an ambulance and tended his wounds. Out of pity, think you, perhaps? No; no such human sentiments existed in those ferocious beasts! You'll never imagine, though, what those people were capable of—those members of the Special Commission and their Public Prosecutor, the blood-thirsty Besnard, the 'White Butcher,' as he was called. By order of that Besnard, my dying father was taken before a courtmartial; he could scarcely stand, for his wounds were still bleeding. Villains! Villains! They sentenced him again, and those brigands shot him a second time! O! Yes, villains!"

She had told her story in a wild outburst of rage, passionately gesticulating, clenching her fists and grinding her teeth; it came out, mixed

all through with wild Italian exclamations, her eyes still dry, but burning with hatred. She stopped, gasping for breath. The other—the Italian nobleman—was looking at her silent and thoughtful.

"Infamous!" cried he, at last. "But you, his daughter, what have you done to avenge him?"

"I?" she retorted, in a rage. "I was a teacher in Marseille. They turned me out as a diseased dog, and I submitted! That's all!"

"That's all? It is very little!"

"Alas!"

"And now, poor thing, you drag a miserable life in the streets of London?"

"I have been so hungry!" was the sullen answer; and shuddering, she now kept silent, while he surveyed her attentively for a while.

"Unfortunate Savelli!" said he in a low tone; and he rose.

Suddenly Rosina stood up in front of the old man, and cried:

"Listen! I am twenty-two years old, and I know that I am very handsome. Is it your wish to avenge the dead? Will you do it? Say yes, and I belong to you body and soul!"

The old man shuddered. After a pause he said:

"Come to see me, Signorina Savelli."

"What day?"

"To-morrow."

"What street?"
"Piccadilly, No. 3."
"For whom shall I ask?"
"For the Prince di Carpegna."

PART THE FIRST

I

JUSTICE

HE who was then reigning over France was called Napoleon.

This Emperor has been for the last eighteen years judged by History. And though History ought to be equitable toward all, it has rendered in his case, nothing but the severest and most unjust verdicts. The man was certainly inferior to his task, and crushed by the weight of his name; but might in other times, have been worthy of an Empire. His enemies have relentlessly persecuted his memory; almost as cruel after his downfall as they had been cowardly during his reign. They seem to have left no room for anything else but contumely; but he, like the suffering ghosts of the popular legends, seems to rise from the very stones of this Paris he has made a marvel, as well as from the rest of beautified France, and ask for justice.

In those days, though, he was reputed great. Hoisted on the throne by a public crime, but absolved from it by the consent of a whole nation, this nephew of "The Man" might have thought himself the equal of "The Man."

He had the luck of Napoleonic genius, and some thought, its boldness. And, in fact, many among the kings of Europe feared him. Napoleon! How formidable this name sounded! Were they going to see with this new Bonaparte, those wonderful times again—those gigantic wars, those defeats without honor, those treaties without mercy?

A Queen of England, knowing herself so near, came to pay him a visit, and a Czar of Russia, knowing himself so far, sent him an insult. Both were afraid, and showed it.

But still more than old Monarchies, did young Revolution fear him; he who from the start had tried to crush it out of existence. O! how they did hate this "Monsieur Bonaparte," all those for whom February, 1848, had appeared as an aurora of liberty, and whom December, 1851, had plunged back into darkness. This motley crowd consisted of nations without a country, of people without a home —the Hungarians, the Poles, the Italians—especially the latter, who never could forget that Louis Napoleon had conspired with them; with them had sworn, as a member of a secret order, to make "Italy Italian," and, as his first act of power, had besieged Rome—Rome who had rid herself of the Popes, and was again the proud Rome of old—the dream of the Brotherhood at last realized. And now, the ex *Car-*

bonaro, oblivious of all his sacred vows, was helping the priesthood, and keeping a garrison in the *irredenta cita!*

Besides, at that time, the Italians had a political dogma. A Republic was necessary in France, so as to become useful to Italy. Oh! if he could only have disappeared—this tyrant, this Louis Napoleon—how the land of the Rienzis would have shaken off its petty kings, and love would have united forever the sister nations! Alas! this Republic so ardently prayed for by you Italians, is again established in France, and you, "The Sister Nation," what do you think of it to-day? How much of your love remains?

But France—the France at large—was fond of him then; fond of her Cæsar lost and found again—of her Napoleon. Already she had pardoned him everything: the crime of the 2d of December, the wholesale slaughtering on the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, the special commissions, the cruel transportation of thousands of innocents, even the exile of the most illustrious among her sons. She loved him. She had been so scared by the others—the Reds. As in the days of the year VIII. of the First Republic, a wave of religious fervor had taken possession of the heart of free-thinking France; the devout Catholics were numerous, and they believed in this strange Messiah. He was, according to them, the instrument of a

revengeful Providence—the creature sent to perform the work of wrath; and he was to do away with all impious innovations—to be the avenger of the city of God. They believed it, and a Pope offered to become the spiritual father of the son and heir of this new Napoleon—this poor Prince Imperial, whose large blue eyes were so soon to become heavy with tears. So *Te Deums* were chanted triumphantly in cathedrals and palaces: "Long live the Emperor!"

The heart of the mercantile class, ordinarily so skeptical, though less enthusiastic, was none the less unreservedly enlisted. Henceforth, they said, no more socialism to fear, public bankruptcy to prevent, riot to repress: the red specter has vanished in the imperial splendors. And in the mansions of the bankers, as well as in the humble dwellings back of the petty stores, they all cried, "Long live the Emperor!"

As to the working people, the still resounding echoes of past salvos and the triumphal firing of cannons awakened proud feelings in their bosoms, and the farmer, looking at his lithograph of the Petit Corporal, and the workman, looking at the Column Vendôme, both cried with a will, "Long live the Emperor!"

"Long live the Emperor!" Yes, the generation of that time uttered with enthusiasm this

old cry of Austerlitz and Jena—the clamor of the " Great Nation."

It considered itself happy ; and what enchanting dreams of happiness ! O ! those days yet so near and already so far—recent events that are nevertheless obscured by legends—when the cannons of the Invalides, Retreat were proclaiming to the world the names of Alma, of Malakoff, of Magenta, of Solferino ; when twice in a decade, the French army traversed Paris carrying laurel twigs fastened to the bayonets of their guns, and all the sovereigns of the earth hurried to the Elysée, this kingly hostelry ; when, to the astonishment of all Europe, the Emperor of the French proved himself to be, in truth, " the Emperor ! "—those beautiful days when glory took in our hearts the place of liberty, will they ever come back ? No : excessive hatred has driven away excessive love, and our pride has shed too many tears ! " The Irreparable " seems forever accomplished ! But ought the grief caused by the final defeat obliterate all memories of the past ? and ought the abyss of Sedan swallow up even the remembrance of our grandeur ? O ! France, France, daughter of ancient Gaul, nation of the *Væ Victis*, art thou, in truth, merciless for the vanquished ?

And thou divine judge of men, whose conscience is sometimes led astray for a short

time, but who often dost absolve kings because thou knowest their peoples—Goddess of History, when wilt thou recall thy judgment?

II

A WEDNESDAY AT COURT

ON that evening, November 24, 1856, the whole front of the Palace of the Tuileries was brilliantly lighted. On the Place du Carrousel stood several rows of carriages, which, entering through the iron gates, and driving under the dome, had landed women in ball attire and men in brilliant uniform. They were to dance at the Castle, for it was the first ball of the season.

This Castle of the Tuileries exists no longer. From the first hour of its convulsive agony, the Commune of 1871 had it doomed to destruction, and no bonfire gave those poor fools that took part in it more joy! Because they destroyed those few stones that spoke of so much grandeur in the past, they thought they were annihilating the Grand Past itself! For a long time, pitiful crumbling walls and falling cupolas —the ruins of the destroyed palace—seemed to cry against civil war; to-day, even those ruins are no more—*etiam periere.*

Through the large opening of the "Carrousel" those who have not forgotten can yet see, in their mental vision, the ghosts of so

many bygone things; but each day makes this vision more and more dim. Now a new generation is nigh indifferent to our regrets; and already children look with astonishment at him who tells them, "Here was a palace whose halls many a king has trodden." Oblivion, so soon!

The writer of this story has had, at one time, many an opportunity of going through this royal dwelling; he has known its last occupants; allow him to recall the vision.

Under the dome, to the right, stretched a broad stone stairway with two landings; it was steep, and hard to climb—a gigantic ladder. On reception nights, torches lighted it, and, on each step, immovable in his cuirass of polished steel, stood one of the giants who formed the squadron of the "Hundred Guards." In a large vestibule at the top, a chamberlain, clad in a scarlet coat, received the guests, who were then introduced in the Fête Hall, a long apartment all white and gold, built by Louis Philippe, in imitation of the gallery of the same name at Versailles. Here no picture on the walls, except an equestrian portrait of Napoleon III, a rather curious picture by Horace Vernet, which occupied the whole of the central panel.

Along the walls was a double row of seats where women and young girls spread out their

silken skirts; and, in one corner, a platform had been erected for the "small orchestra." The other orchestra, that of Strauss, was placed in the Marshals' Hall.

The crystal chandeliers, the torches and the candelabras threw a flood of light on all this white and gold decoration. The gorgeous scene was reflected in the large mirrors; and what with the show of the uniforms, the glitter of satin and precious stones, those imperial festivals offered a sight one has never seen since.

At one end of this first hall, a large opening draped with crimson velvet led into the Marshals' Hall. This famous hall, which was for a long time considered a model of architecture, was square in shape, and as high as the Central Dome. Gigantic white marble cariatides supported the ceiling, and full-length portraits of the marshals of the First Empire adorned the walls. The aspect was imposing and majestic in the extreme.

It was there, close to a raised throne draped with purple and gold bees, that Napoleon III was to be found on state occasions. Usually he left his private apartments at 10 o'clock; then the ball was opened, and the presentations to the Empress began. Toward midnight, Napoleon would wend his way through the dancing hall, and soon after seek the seclusion of his own apartments.

On that particular evening—an official "Wednesday evening," as it was called—there was dancing at the Tuileries. An ever-moving crowd filled the imperial drawing-rooms, and the ball had reached a high degree of animation, when M. le Vicomte Marcel Besnard, coming from his club, joined the distinguished guests of the night.

He was a young man about twenty-eight years old, of fine appearance and proud bearing; tall, dark, with piercing black eyes. He had the haughty mien and the disdainful manners of the fashionable men of the day; his mustache was long and pointed; he wore an impériale, and his hair was parted in the middle and carefully brushed forward on the temples. In short, he was a typical swell, a *gandin*, as such as he were called then. His slender shape allowed him to wear with ease the tight-fitting uniform of assessor of the Council of State; it consisted of a blue coat with collar and cuffs embroidered with silver, white knee-pants, a straight sword and a cocked hat ornamented with black feathers. This latter article of dress he carelessly carried crushed under his right arm.

The Viscount sported a single eye-glass, and entered the room with a lofty air, slightly dragging, as a sign of peculiar elegance, his buckled shoes on the waxed floor. He glanced at the guests who were crowded in the first

hall, and walked quickly towards the Marshals' Hall. But, on the threshold he had to stop—a treble row of men and women preventing him from going any farther.

The Emperor was just then dancing a quadrille, and from every side people had hurried to have a good look at his Majesty balancing back and forth. So Marcel Besnard had to retreat, and sat down impatient and annoyed. In front of him whirled numerous dancers, but they belonged to the class of petty government officials. It was customary at the court to reserve the Marshals' Hall for the high dignitaries, such as foreign ambassadors, ministers of state, renowned generals, senators, or secretaries of state. As to the lesser officials, with more modest embroidery on their uniforms, they had to be satisfied with staying in the long dancing hall.

There, could be seen elbowing each other prefects, sub-prefects, heads of the different departments of state, official engineers, colonels, a whole army of big and small epaulets; there, too, were found magistrates looking very grand in their black velvet attire, and even some members of the French Academy, their coats covered with embroidered green palms. Marcel Besnard looked on as one surfeited with the splendors of the imperial Wednesdays, when suddenly he turned around.

"My respects to the most brilliant of viscounts!" a young man had said, wearing the uniform of the foreign affairs.

"Is that you, Gravenoire," replied Marcel. "How do you do, my dear fellow? Oh, what a stifling crowd!"

"Over a thousand invitations, I understand; the finest people in the empire; what a gathering! But, how is Count Besnard?"

"My father? Much better, thank you. He is back to town again, and has already taken up his duties as councilor of state."

"I am happy to hear such good news. What was his trouble?"

"Some sort of nervous disease. The doctors did not seem to understand his case; but now, fortunately, he is quite well again."

"Are you alone to-night, Viscount?"

"Entirely alone with my ennui."

"Did not Mademoiselle Marie-Anne accompany you?"

Marcel Besnard shrugged his shoulders. "No; my sister stayed with my father; besides, she never goes anywhere."

"And where did you spend the hunting season?" asked the budding diplomat.

"In Normandy, in my small castle of Sasseville."

"Where is your castle of Sasseville?"

"In the department of the Seine Inferieure,

near Fecamp, a piece of property my mother left me."

"Is it a pretty place?"

"Wonderfully so; it belongs to me, you know," and Marcel laughed good humoredly; then he added: "Ah! look, Gravenoire, what's that?"

And his glance called his friend's attention to a young woman near by sitting on an armchair as on a throne, and surrounded by a noisy circle of admirers.

She looked remarkably handsome, indeed; a brunette of small stature, but with large blue eyes, superb shoulders and shapely form. Her black, wavy hair fell down in long braids, as was the fashion then, and gracefully curled around her oval face. On her head she wore a wreath of wild roses besprinkled with diamonds, and a bouquet of the same flowers fastened to her corsage. Carelessly lounging on an armchair the lady buried the lower limbs of her near neighbors under the fullness of a yellow satin skirt with three flounces of black lace. Her hand, rather large, was moving an ostrich feather fan, opening and closing it with a series of well studied coquettish motions. Beaux of every age surrounded her, flattering her and talking all sorts of nonsense, each one trying to make himself the most agreeable. This wonderful woman certainly enjoyed the sport, for

every time a word a little too free was uttered she would throw herself back in the chair hiding part of her face with her fan, but her eyes could yet be seen sparkling with delight. In this movement of abandon and studied timidity sometimes her dress would rise just a little and disclose a pretty foot, even a shapely ankle; then there was sure to arise a murmur of admiration; when she would modestly push her skirts down again.

"Well! who is this adventuress?" asked the auditor of his friend.

Gravenoire looked at him astonished: "You know her very well! She is Rosina."

"What Rosina?"

"I pity you, my dear fellow! Have you become a hermit? She is the reigning beauty, just now! Rosina, Princess di Carpegna."

Marcel Besnard began to laugh:

"I did not know it. What a peculiar name—an assumed title, no doubt?"

"Not at all! A real princess! The Carpegnas belong to an illustrious family of Romagna. Dante has written a whole verse about them in the Purgatory of his Divina Commedia. Even she, it seems, is a countess d'a-Prata, another old noble stock from Ravenna; but about this, I will not be too positive. However, I was introduced to her, last year in Venice. She occupied a palace on the Grand

PASTARELLA

Canal; received the best society and lived in superb style."

From afar Marcel was scrutinizing the young woman. "Very pretty, that is a fact! But what a strange attire? A yellow satin dress, trimmed with wild roses and black lace! A foreigner's taste, of course."

"She has the Parisian style, though, this amiable Rosina. She seems somewhat inclined to flirt."

"Pshaw! What an affectation that of wearing the Austrian colors!"

"It is, perhaps, in honor of her noble husband, who was an old conspirator, but repented and now courts favor of the tyrants."

"There is a live husband, then?"

"Oh! not much of a one. He never shows himself, and people say that they cannot endure each other; they live entirely apart."

"In that case, introduce me, my dear chap."

"You, Lovelace!"

And they went toward Princess di Carpegna.

"Monsieur de Gravenoire!" exclaimed Princess di Carpegna, as soon as she saw the young diplomat. "What a stranger you have been lately!"

He excused himself in a few words.

"I am settled in Passy," continued the Princess, in my little chartreuse on the Des Jardins street, and ——"

"Can one become a superior in your convent, Princess?"

"Not even a beadle, you conceited man! But I receive with pleasure those of my friends who are willing to undertake this afar-off pilgrimage."

"Madame," said Gravenoire, "allow me to introduce one of my best friends, Viscount Marcel Besnard."

A sudden tremor shook the hand toying with the fan, and a slight blush covered the pale face of the Italian woman.

"Viscount Marcel Besnard?" she said, in a very serious tone, "belongs, doubtless, to the family of Count Brutus Besnard?"

"He is my father, madam."

"The former General Prosecutor?"

"Himself."

"He is your father, Sir?"

Her large blue eyes rested for a few moments upon the young man, then, still looking at him, she held out her hand, saying:

"A friend of one of my friends, you are from this moment, one of mine also. Pray, sit down, Viscount."

She spoke a perfectly correct French, harmonious, and resounding with a slight foreign accent; her voice was low and caressing; her mouth was smiling and showed her superb teeth. The conversation which had been in-

terrupted, began anew. It resumed its sway as a perfect shower of compliments and rather equivocal jokes.

The old Baron La Chesnaye, a Deputy Chamberlain, an effeminate sexagenarian, with a waxed mustache and a bald head, a la Morny, was making merry, louder than the rest, in his cynical, stupid way. The young woman listened and answered, evidently amused and amusing.

The orchestra soon began the prelude of a Strauss waltz, "Die Morgenblätter."

"Will the Princess grant me the favor of a waltz?" asked the young assessor.

She rose at once, remarking, with a smile: "Generally, I do not care for dancing; but I will refuse nothing to the son of Count Besnard."

"Take care," cried the old La Chesnaye, "you don't know what he is going to ask of you!"

"Is he not of an age to dare much?" she replied, gaily.

A joyous outburst followed her answer.

She, languidly taking the arm of the young man, leaned on it and gently pressed it; he, in blissful ecstasy, hurried through the crowd without speaking, fearing lest he might break the charm that already bound them together.

"So, sir," she asked for the second time, "you are the son of Count Brutus Besnard, the former Prosecutor General?"

"Yes, to-day, a State Councilor; you know my father, Princess?"

"Oh! no, not personally; but I know his name;" and in a caressing tone she added:

"It is a name heavy to bear!"

Marcel bowed; then, finally took the young woman in his arms and followed the waltzers. She, with her eyes closed and her cheek almost touching his, lay entirely helpless in his embrace. Suddenly, they had to stop; the music had ceased. The leader of the orchestra struck three times on his desk and, right away, violins and wind instruments struck up the official hymn of the *Queen Hortense*. The tall figure of the High Chamberlain, the Duc of Bassano, had just appeared on the threshold of the dancing hall, and pronounced the customary, formal words:

"The Emperor!"

"What is it?" asked the astonished Madame di Carpegna.

"It is the Emperor!" said Marcel. "He is going the round of the ball before retiring to his apartments."

With a sudden movement, the young woman freed herself from his hold. A strange transformation took place: no more languor, no

more abandon; but her eyes brightened, and a slight quiver passed over her face.

"The Emperor!" She cried; "Quick, O come quick! I must have a good look at him——"

In the hall the dancers had already formed a double line; they pushed and crowded each other in their anxiety to see their lord and master.

Protected by her escort, the Princess di Carpegna was able to reach the front row. The orchestra was silent then, and a low murmur was passing from one group to another; the imperial cortége was advancing.

First, came the officers of the Hundred Guards with their carved breastplates and their steel, white-maned helmets. Behind them came the Emperor's staff in blue coats with silver trimmings; then the Master of Ceremonies in purple, the equerries in the colors of the Bonapartes, gold and green; then the High Chamberlain in his scarlet coat; and finally,

The Emperor!

Napoleon III wore that night the uniform of general-in-chief and the great cordon of the Legion of Honor. He was walking along, dragging his feet, his whole body seeming half disjointed, and his look, while gazing upon the undulating crowd, came from lusterless eyes,

visibly listless and weary. As he advanced, he kept twisting his mustache mechanically. At times, in this brilliant assemblage, he would recognize some functionary; then his face would brighten up and he would stop and address a few words of welcome, in an amiable and fascinating manner.

He was going to pass on. Suddenly the Princess di Carpegna stretched out her head as if to see better, and in doing so dropped her fan, uttering a little cry as of embarrassment.

Napoleon stopped short, stooped and picked up the fan. Then with strange self-assurance, the young woman took one step towards him holding out her hand. For a few seconds they looked at each other. She stared at him both confused and bold, blushing and silent.

The Emperor bowed and went on.

Now he was smiling and swaggering all the more, and his nervous fingers kept twisting his mustache. A few steps farther, recognizing the Chamberlain La Chesnaye, he signed to him; the other bowed deep as the Master whispered something in his ear.

Half an hour later, Napoleon III had re-entered his own apartments.

III

Simple Effect of a Couplet

"YOUR Emperor is a charming man!" declared the princess, who had become herself again, "both gallant and graceful! Louis XIV. has found a peer. He is simply delightful." She had again taken hold of the arm of her escort, and was walking about the hall talkative and coquettish.

"What a magnificent entertainment, Viscount! I have been to a great many official receptions in Italy; but, alas! our miserable *festiccinole* cannot compare with the splendors of your court! Our princes are so insignificant, so poor, almost beggars, real *lazzaroni!* Oh! but what a splendid reception this is!"

"Are you in Paris to stay?" asked Marcel.

"I am, at least for a while. I love Paris."

"And the Parisians, Princess?"

"Your Parisians? O, they are rather dangerous for a poor thing like me, alone and without any protector."

She spoke with a very sweet and gentle voice; at the same time leaning caressingly on Marcel's arm, and again pressing it almost imperceptibly.

In this way, they arrived in the hall where the standing supper had been prepared.

A confused mass of people, elbowing each other, officers and functionaries, took the buffet by storm, each one trying to obtain a glass of champagne or of a slice of "*Paté-de-fois-gras;*" a most shameful spectacle of voracity, and in every clime to be found the same; the old human monkey will show himself at times.

"When is your reception day, Princess?" asked Marcel, who had been made thoughtful by the last words of the "poor thing, alone and without a protector."

"Saturday, my dear Viscount; however, you will be welcome any day. Oh! if I could——" She stopped short, and with a nervous movement drew herself back. "Ah! mon Dieu!" she stammered, "let us not go that way! Let us avoid that man—that one there—he is such a bad man!"

And with a gesture full of fear, she pointed at one of the guests, seated on a sofa near by, and conversing with animation. He was dressed in an elegant court suit; swallow tail coat, lace frill, and sword by his side.

"Who is such a bad man?" asked Marcel jokingly—"the man over there, that good, old, fatherly looking gentleman, smooth faced and remarkably bald? What a splendid skull he has! At a show of baldheads, our friend La

Chesnaye himself would have to acknowledge himself beaten."

He fixed his eyeglass, and looked in that direction in his usual impertinent way ; then he added :

"But, your bugbear is nothing but some old vestryman ! a second-class deacon, or rather a *monsignore* without his purple stockings ! That he should scare you ! What folly !"

"He is a very bad man !" she stammered again, in the tone of a scared child ; she seemed really frightened.

Marcel turned round to avoid the man ; but the latter had already risen from his seat, and still conversing was unostentatiously following the assessor and his companion.

Both had to stop in the crowd.

"I am very hungry," said Princess di Carpegna, suddenly quieting down; "let us try and get to the buffet."

With a good deal of trouble, Marcel made a way for his companion, and having seated her before a table, took his station behind, to serve and protect her. A voice, which was heard above the hubbub of the crowd, made him raise his head :

"Who is this evening the *cavaliere servante* of the beautiful Rosina ?"

"I have just heard his name—a certain Besnard, they say."

"Any relation to the Councilor of State?"

"I think so."

There was a short silence, then the voice went on, scornful and haughty:

"To the man whom the Poet has so cruelly branded when he wrote:

> Prosecutor Besnard, Brutus only by chance—
> Executioner's son, one by inheritance!"

Marcel turned round quickly and found himself face to face with the *Monsignore*-looking man who was impudently inspecting him from head to foot.

"These are very detestable verses, sir," said the young man, "and you seem to be in need of a lesson in poetry! I am the son of Count Brutus Besnard. Please wait for me—I must speak to you!"

"I am at your service, sir. You will find me, presently; but not here, I suppose. Let it be in the Hall of Apollo."

During this colloquy, the Princess had not stirred; she seemed entirely taken up with the refreshments. Did she hear?

Soon she requested the arm of her escort, and Marcel took her somewhat hurriedly back to her seat.

The return of Madame di Carpegna was the signal for joyous exclamations. La Chesnaye, Gravenoire, and the others had been waiting for her. The circle again closed around her, and

the nonsense began worse than ever, gallant and fearless. Chamberlain La Chesnaye, with a triumphant gesture, flattened down the hair on his temples, and leaning over Madame di Carpegna's shoulder:

"Ah! bewitching one," whispered he, "who knows so well how to handle a fan and break hearts. What an impression you have made! If you only wished it?"

"I wished what?" she asked, looking at him with both an impudent and naive look.

He came nearer still and whispered very low a few words in her ear.

The young woman threw herself back, uttered a sonorous laugh and said:

"Oh! fie! you naughty joker! Such a lowly one as I am! Nonsense!"

"What is that suborner of innocence whispering to you?" asked Gravenoire.

"Nothing!" she answered, quickly; "nothing but amiable gossip!" and, pointing at the gold key strung on a ribbon hanging upon the red coat of the Chamberlain, she added: "He wishes to open for me all the chambers of this palace—*Che pazzo!!*"

Marcel, during this time, had hurried to his appointment.

Apollo Hall, being some distance from the dancing hall, had scarcely anybody in it. The stranger, now alone, was carelessly stretched

in an armchair. The assessor pushed a chair close to him, seated himself, and leaning towards the man who had uttered the insulting words: "I am the son of Count Brutus Besnard," he whispered, "and you have just now insulted my father!" The other smoothed the lace of his frill; then, calm and smiling, he said, in a gentle and placid tone:

"Insulted your father, my poor sir? I am sorry to say he is not one of those that can be insulted——"

Marcel pulled off the glove from his left hand. "What does this mean?"

"It means that Prosecutor-General Besnard, an old provider of victims for the hated Commission of 1852, has been atrociously cruel."

The young man rose threateningly. "You lie! My father has always done his duty, nothing more!"

"Even," retorted the other, slowly, "even when he shot twice the unfortunate Savelli. Your father, sir, is an infamous man——"

The glove came down upon his face, lashing it. He rose, straightened himself up with perfect calm, and said: "To-morrow I shall kill you, sir!"

The son of the ex-Prosecutor-General shrugged his shoulders. "You, twin brother to Pulcinello, what's your name?"

"Here is my card!"

Marcel Besnard grabbed it, looked at it, and, struck with amazement, read:

PRINCE DI CARPEGNA.

In the dancing hall, around the charming Rosina, the circle of her admirers were having a noisy good time, and among the entertainers of the artless creature, La Chesnaye and Gravenoire were the leaders.

Without a minute's hesitation, Marcel hurried to join them.

IV

COUNT BRUTUS

COUNT BRUTUS BESNARD bore one of the most illustrious names of the great imperial period. He was the son of that Joseph Besnard, who was the friend of Siéyès, and an intimate at the Malmaison, one of the legislators who had taken such an active part in bringing about the eighteenth of "Brumaire." Every one in France is familiar with the public life of this eminent lawyer. He was one of the law-makers who framed the code Cambacerès of 1793, a member of the Constituting Assembly, of the Convention, of the Council of Five Hundred, of the Tribunat, of the Conservative Senate, and had been made a Count of the Empire. In short, he was a true child of the Revolution; but what many do not know are the curious details of his private life, especially the strange mystery relating to his death.

One might read, either in the *Gazette Nationale* or in the *Moniteur Universel*, dated June 16, 1810, the following paragraph signed S.—that is to say, Sauve himself, one of the bright lights of those days:

We have just received the announcement of the death of Monsieur le comte Besnard, member of the Conservative Senate and of the Imperial High Court of Justice, one of the Commanders in the Legion of Honor, and chancellor of the sixth cohort. The Count died suddenly in Paris yesterday. Neither in the age nor in the robust constitution of this indefatigable worker was there anything to prognosticate his untimely death.

The Count died from the rupture of a blood vessel. All those who have been able to appreciate the character of this great and good man will certainly join their regrets with those which His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor and King, has deigned to address to his widow.

Count Besnard leaves a son who will be his worthy heir and perpetuate his virtues.

But one might also have read, a few months later, in *The Indiscret*, a Royalist pamphlet edited by Fauché-Borel, that scamp whom Louis XVIII called his "Little Fauché" (second edition, London, 1811, without any printer's name), the following strange notice:

BESNARD (LOUIS JOSEPH), *alias Count Besnard*, *alias Citizen La Vertu*, born in the district of Amont (Franche-Comté) about 1750, died in Paris in 1810. The biography of this man would require a whole volume; the name he deserves, but one word: Scoundrel!

Louis Joseph Besnard was a priest of the diocese of Besançon when the hateful Revolution began. Sent by the clergy of his province to the "Etats Généraux" of 1789, from the start he shows himself to be among the most zealous and ardent supporters of the "Constitutional church" schism: Grégoire himself was less violent. Later, as a member of the Convention, in those bloody days of folly, he sits with the red republicans, votes the death of his king, worships the goddess

Reason, and votes a decree for a permanent guillotine. They surname him "Virtue!" It is about this time that he completes his infamous political career by a solemn apostasy of his sacerdotal character. This apostate falls in love with a dancer from the Theatre Favart, the too famous Florine, and publicly marries her. Gobel, Siéyès, and Chabot, priests and renegades like himself, applaud. Oh! what an epoch! What morals!

On the "18th of Brumaire," "Virtue" offers his services to Bonaparte, and the Corsican eagerly accepts this fresh accomplice. Besnard becomes a member of the Tribunat, and soon has a Senatorship tendered him as a reward for his complaisance. The former "Sans-culotte" puts on the silk breeches. *Virtue* becomes *Monsieur le Comte*, and the ex-nymph, Florine, has a stool at Court! But God was watching.

Suddenly, on the 15th of June, 1810, they hear that the Imperial Senator is dead. Big scandal! the unfortunate man, driven to desperation by his wife's shameful conduct, has shot himself. One more of our Jacobins has appeared before his Maker. *They rest from their work, but the fruits follow them.*

Joseph Besnard leaves a son; poor child!

Well, this son, who was called by the imperialist newspaper, "the worthy heir of the paternal virtues," and by the corrupt royalist libeler "Poor child," was, in 1856, Monsieur le Comte Besnard, Councilor of State in ordinary, and commander in the imperial order of the Legion of Honor.

His name was Brutus; he was born on the 5th "Frimaire" of the year 111, and had for godfather Lakanal, this other "Citizen *la Vertu.*" He had been a hard-working young

man, and had bravely fought the battle of life. His mother, a woman of no moral character, had died shortly after the restoration of the Bourbon kings, leaving him without any means.

In those days of fierce reaction, in that period called the "White Terror," the son of the regicide felt his father's name keeping him down as a heavy burden, but being very proud he accepted the burden.

In the presence of the old nobility, those dukes and marquises who had just reëntered France, after having emigrated from it, he proudly preserved his imperial title, "Count Brutus Besnard." They had laughed at him, and his disposition had become more and more embittered. And yet this enthusiastic Bonapartist compared favorably with any of them. Never had he joined any of those who cried, "Down with the Jesuits!" For his taste inclined towards the "black men." His mind was full of a strange mysticism; he believed, ardently believed. The priest, Joseph Besnard, he who abjured Christ, had brought into the world a Christian.

As a member of the Paris bar, the young lawyer had early acquired a brilliant reputation. At thirty-two years of age he was pronounced to be the rival of Dupin, Odilon-Barrot and Chaix d'Est Ange; but he had not grown so rich as those protectors of the poor. Even in

those days, this republican by origin had ceased to defend the republicans, and the martyrdom of a Paul-Louis or of a Béranger left him indifferent or scornful. The disorder in the French Parliament, the agitation on the Paris streets, the approaching storm of popular riot displeased him. Of the whole great revolution, he never reverenced anything but its destructor, Napoleon.

When Charles X. was driven into exile, Louis Philippe made Brutus Besnard an assistant district attorney at the Paris court.

From that time his promotions followed each other rapidly. Within a few years, he exchanged the black gown for the scarlet robe and the ermine cloak. Never tired and always ready, his thorough knowledge of law, his eloquence, his integrity, his austerity, and his independence caused him to be feared by those evil-doers his office made his enemies.

This son of a renegade priest and a regicide was now somewhat of a terrorist and an inquisitor. Being a devout Catholic, he considered God's enemies as his own. The son wished, perhaps, to atone for his father's atheism; perhaps he hoped that all his good deeds would relieve the suffering soul in Purgatory. He was bitter on others' weaknesses because he had none himself; his implacable heart was seemingly as hard as the guillotine knife, which

he declared in open court, one day, to be "the last moralizing agent of France!"

"A culprit acquitted," he used to say, "is the condemnation of the judge!"

The government of 1848 found him a member of the Court of Appeals at Aix, and, notwithstanding his defiantly reactionary attitude, did not dare remove him; and in December, 1851, he still occupied a seat on the same bench.

With what joy this mystic had welcomed the news of the "Coup d'etat!" How he applauded the strangling of the Republic, "the killing," he said, "of the 'beast full of blasphemy!'" All through the South there reigned a great agitation. In the departments of the Var and of the Bouches-du-Rhone, a *jacquerie*, a peasant's revolt, was in progress; Italian refugees fought among the rioters; it threatened to grow into a cosmopolitan revolution. These unfortunates were severely dealt with; Brutus Besnard sent them all before the Special Commissions, and led the prosecution with vehement eloquence. Thanks to him, Lambessa and French Guiana were filled with exiles, and, according to a saying of that time, he "colonized cemeteries." As for those caught in arms, they went before the Court Martial, and that was as good as sending them to death. Several were sentenced to be shot; they even dared to shoot a second time an unfortunate

Italian who had only been wounded in the first execution.

And in this very case, the Prosecutor-General had himself furnished all the evidence and demanded emphatically this second execution: the blood of the miserable Savelli rested thus truthfully on the head of Brutus Besnard.

As a natural consequence, the vanquished of 1851 nursed a horrified hatred against this pitiless provider of the guillotine. "Here goes the white butcher," whispered the people when, on the days of official *Te Deums*, they saw the pale old man coming down the cathedral nave, clad in his long red garments.

So much zeal deserved a reward. On the 1st of January, 1854, Count Brutus Besnard was made a State Councilor. The ministers of the new Empire hoped, no doubt, that they had gained in him a devoted tool; they were mistaken, and soon found out what sort of a man they had to deal with.

Shortly after this appointment, the State Council was examining the by-laws of a financial corporation who wanted to establish some sort of industrial monopoly. A very influential personage, well received at the Tuileries, but a corrupt and corrupting man, was in favor of this establishment. It was evident to all that he had been bought over.

The governmental pressure soon became so

strong that the Council, though unwillingly, was going to vote in favor of the company, when Count Besnard rose in his seat:

"I have had twenty-four years' experience in the practice of law," cried he, "but, until to-day, I was ignorant of what a public swindle really can be!"

"Sir," interrupted Baroche, the president of the Council, "this body has never before heard such language."

"It will hear it in the future," retorted the Count, and he went on with his speech.

The desired authorization was refused to the corporation. Exasperated by this exposure, the favorite at the Tuileries complained to the Emperor, who summoned to his presence the too outspoken Councilor.

The defense of Count Besnard was short and abrupt:

"Your Majesty has been pleased to call me to your Council to advise, I suppose, and not to applaud only."

The conversation having run on more general topics, he added:

"Sire, God absolves a political crime when it is necessary to the furtherance of His supreme law; whenever this law is violated, the crime becomes doubly criminal."

Whether the Count was alluding to the *coup d'etat* of the second of December or to his

own doing, the execution of Savelli, no one could say.

Napoleon smiled his peculiar smile, twisted his mustache, and nodded assent without uttering a word.

From that day, Count Brutus Besnard was a favorite with his suspicious Sovereign ; but also from that day he was hated by the ministry.

At the time our story begins, he was a tall, old man, already white and bent, with a superb head, long hair thrown back, and black eyes full of fire. He had been a widower for some time and lived with his son Marcel, and his daughter Marie-Anne, in a private mansion, the dowry of his wife. It was situated on the Avenue Breteuil, and there he hoped to rest and end his days, for he had grown more and more tired of so much conflict. Each year he divided his salary in three parts: one was offered to the Society of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul of which he was a member; the second was mysteriously sent to the needy families of criminals, whom he had himself sentenced ; the third part—scarcely eight thousand francs—was to be sufficient for all his needs.

After dividing between his children the increased fortune of their mother, he chose the upper story of the mansion for his habitation, leaving the rest to them. There, he occupied two rooms with Mansard roofs; one, his bed-

room, had no other furniture than an iron bedstead, a few straw chairs, an old tapestry armchair and a praying stool with a crucifix in front; the other was his sitting room and library. There again might be seen a crucifix, many books, and a piano on which his daughter would play for him on long winter evenings. Whether it was to mortify the flesh or to accomplish a vow, this strange man lived this life of self-immolation. But he had the ostentation of his humility. And while his son "the Viscount," a worldly young man, lived fast, kept a carriage and a valet, he, the father of the family, had only a good old woman, Philomène, to serve him.

The days of the State Councilor were spent in continuous, hard work. He rose every morning, even in winter, at five o'clock, and, bending over his bundles of legal papers, began his work for the public good. At seven, he went to a low mass, which was said for him "for a certain purpose," and where he would often linger as in an ecstasy. On coming home he again settled down to his task until the first meal, which he took with his children. He then kissed his daughter, conversed a few moments with his son and went to his labors, at the Council Chamber.

He always accomplished his duty with an inflexible conscience, which seemed bent on

satisfying itself only. His colleagues loved him little, but esteemed him much. In the legislative section, where he sat, they respectfully listened to his advice; in the Grand Council they admired his eloquence. As to the society people, they were at first scared by this monastical misanthrope; but soon left him alone with his strange ways—he who was trying to shun them. All invitations to balls or concerts were left unnoticed, with the exception of a few official and obligatory receptions or banquets; he never went anywhere. All his evenings were spent in the company of his daughter, a sickly and deformed creature. "Come, darling, you are my opera; I listen!" Then he would sit down in his armchair, and, until late in the night, he would demand, from the soothing talent of his child, rest and quiet.

As a natural consequence of all this, imperial Paris ridiculed the bizarre character of this unsociable man—of this Monsieur Brutus, as they would familiarly call him. At the Council, this dreadful name was a subject for endless jokes, and one of the young assessors, who could write Latin poetry, tried his hand at it:

"The ancient Brutus, once upon a time, sentenced his son to death for being too fond of Etruscan ladies, and you, modern Brutus, what will you do with yours?"

The joke was rather insipid; however, the

Secretary of State, having had it translated, declared it was charming and to the point.

And thus was the old, broken-down lawyer, spending the rest of the monotonous days which were bringing him close to his death.

V

WORDS AND CONSCIENCE

NINE o'clock was just striking, and a November morning lighted up with its snowy glare the dwelling rooms of Count Besnard. In his study, near a small wood fire, sat the Count listening to his daughter.

On that day he had risen in a still more sullen mood than usual; for that day, the twenty-fifth of November—Fifth Frimaire of the republican calendar—was his birthday, and it was to be celebrated among themselves. At dawn, Marie-Anne had entered her father's apartments, bringing him a basket of autumn flowers; then, both had waited for Marcel, but in vain. After a few moments of conversation, the young girl becoming uneasy, had gone down to her brother's room in search of him, but had returned hurriedly, pale and anxious:

"Oh! some misfortune must have happened!" cried the bewildered girl. "The room is empty, the bed has not been touched!"

But the old man had shrugged his shoulders and, unable to contain himself any longer, for Marcel's conduct had grieved him much of late, he said:

"This is the way with the sons of the middle class—they grow more and more useless and dissipated! More guilty a hundred times than the fast men of the ancient nobility, for those at least had some honor left! And this is the kind of men that are to succeed us! Oh! rotten and condemned society! My child, let us go and pray to God."

At Saint Valière, that day, this devout old man remained longer than usual on his knees, apparently lost in meditation; and towards ten o'clock, after his return, father and daughter sat alone in the library. Neither news nor message from Marcel had yet arrived.

"My heart aches this morning," said the Count. "Come, my darling, a little music to soothe my pain."

She also, poor Marie-Anne, had her eyes full of tears; but, always docile, she obeyed, and soon her voice came out vibrating and full of feeling; a superb mezzo-soprano voice. At first she sang some light *arie* from the old French masters, Dalayrac and Méhul; but soon an impatient gesture from her father interrupted her; it was evident that the old *répertoire* of the Favart Theater—that of the Diva Florine—was distasteful to him.

"No, none of those insignificant tunes! Sing for me the spinning song."

"The song which we heard one day at

Audierne?" she asked, getting strangely pale. "I really don't think I remember it, and I am afraid ——"

"No matter! Try, little one. I listen."

This song was a sort of popular ballad, in the dialect of Cornouailles, which Marie-Anne had heard at Audierne, in one of her journeys to Britany, between a blue gulf and a pine wood not far from the bay des Trépassés. Her brother had tried to translate it into French poetry, amateur poetry, poor, uncouth, scarcely rhymed; but he had succeeded in preserving the gentle and simple sentiment.

"So you do not remember it?" asked Count Besnard, noticing his daughter's prolonged hesitation.

"Oh! yes, I do," she replied in a low tone. "I remember it now. I remember it ——" And she began:

I

My spinning wheel, sing, sing,
Make the thread laugh and talk.
What does it say that delights thee?
It wants to spin a fine veil,
The beautiful veil of the bride.
To-day I am affianced
To my love, my love, my love!
He who will always cherish me.
The white veil of the bride,
A fine veil to adorn me;
Oh! my dear, gallant lover,
I shall be thy bride to-morrow

II

My spinning wheel weeps, weeps,
Making the thread groan and cry.
What does it say at this hour?
It wants to spin a fine veil
The sweet veil which wraps us all,
And clothes us in the earth;
Since he has scorned my love,
He, whom I shall always adore—
The white veil which wraps us all
Where we lay our heavy hearts
Will soon clothe me under the earth,
For I shall be dead to-morrow."

Sitting in his armchair, with his eyes closed, Count Besnard listened in silence. At times, when a note came out, more passionate and sonorous, he would lift his eyelids and gaze steadily at his daughter.

"Exactly my mother's voice!" he would say, in a low voice. "Oh! my poor, unfortunate child!"

Marie-Anne Besnard was then twenty-two years old. Very homely and keenly sensitive about her utter lack of beauty, the usual expression of her face was profoundly melancholy. Her head was buried in her shoulders; she was almost a humpback; her thin wan face was ashy pale, and underneath her large blue eyes dark circles could be seen. Her hair, worn flat on the temples, had that discolored tint which is popularly called "albino blonde," a sure sign

of the wretched quality of the blood. Her way of dressing was austere to a degree, her brown silk dress, without any trimming, fell around her like a bag, and a tulle ruche enveloped her neck, hiding perhaps some blemish. She was the sad picture of youth faded before ever blooming.

"Enough, darling," interrupted Count Besnard, surprised by the excitement of the little *virtuoso*. "How pale you are this morning! Are you suffering?"

"I am the same as every day, father; indeed more cheerful than other days, for is not to-day your birthday?"

"You are too lonely, dear child," resumed the father; "I wish you would take some recreation."

"Recreation?" she asked, with a sad smile.

"You ought to have gone to the ball at the Tuileries with your brother, last night."

The poor girl blushed:

"Oh! father! cruel father!" she suddenly cried, rising and taking a few steps around the room. One could see then that Mademoiselle Besnard, this sickly, homely and suffering girl, was, beside, lame and a cripple. The old man rushed to her, caught her in his arms and said:

"Oh! pardon me! pardon me, my beloved child!" And he sorrowfully embraced the frail creature; but she said caressingly:

"Oh! father, even if God had been willing to make the sad Marie-Anne like other women, she would not change her way of living. As you live, I shall live." At that moment, the door opened and Marcel walked in.

On coming home, the young man had first gone to his room to take off his uniform and put on citizen's clothes; he came in with his gloves on, holding his hat in his hand, ready to go out again.

Count Besnard gave him a glance which plainly showed his anger and scorn; then, without a word, he sat down.

Slowly, Marcel advanced and stood in front of him.

"Father, please excuse my absence on such a day; but I have not been able to come home sooner. I am about fighting a duel."

A violent spasm shook the old man's frame; still he controlled himself, and, with apparent indifference said:

"A duel, sir? Receive my congratulations! and for what motive, if I may ask?"

"To defend my honor—yours, father."

"My honor?" exclaimed the Count, rising. "My honor, did you say? Who has dared attack it?"

"Last night, during the court ball, an insolent man did not fear to call our family, 'an executioner's race.' He was outraging my grand-

father; you, father, and all of us. The insult was public, the answer was public, too—I slapped his face——"

"And you are going to kill him to-day!" cried Marie-Anne shuddering.

Standing now very pale, Count Besnard was looking at his son, but with an expression of infinite love. His Marcel! He might have been thoughtless, like so many others, even fast, in his ways, alas! but loyal he still remained and full of courage! A brave heart! The father held out his hand:

"You did right, my son! Worship honor! It is one of the grandest obligations which God has imposed upon man. In such an emergency, dueling is lawful; it is the preserver of honor, and on this point society is right and the law is wrong. But what is the name of the insulter?"

"A certain Prince di Carpegna."

"An Italian! That explains it; and how old is he?"

The son was intently looking at his father; the expression of his face frightened him. He saw that a terrible wrath was taking possession of the old man, and that doubtless he was thinking of avenging himself.

He suddenly thought it better to tell a "white lie." "How old? Well, about as old as I am. It is a quarrel between young men."

"Still you struck him?"

"Pshaw!" said Marcel, lightly; "a quick answer on my part brought out what they call in comedies, "a sudden invitation to breakfast!'"

"You deceive me. What are the conditions?"

"It's all a mere farce! A picnic; an exchange of bullets at twenty-five paces distant!"

"You understand handling a pistol, I know. Who are your seconds?"

"My friend Gravenoire and Baron La Chesnaye."

"I would have preferred some others; and where is the encounter to take place?"

"At Vaucresson, in Gravenoire's park."

"All right! I go with you!"

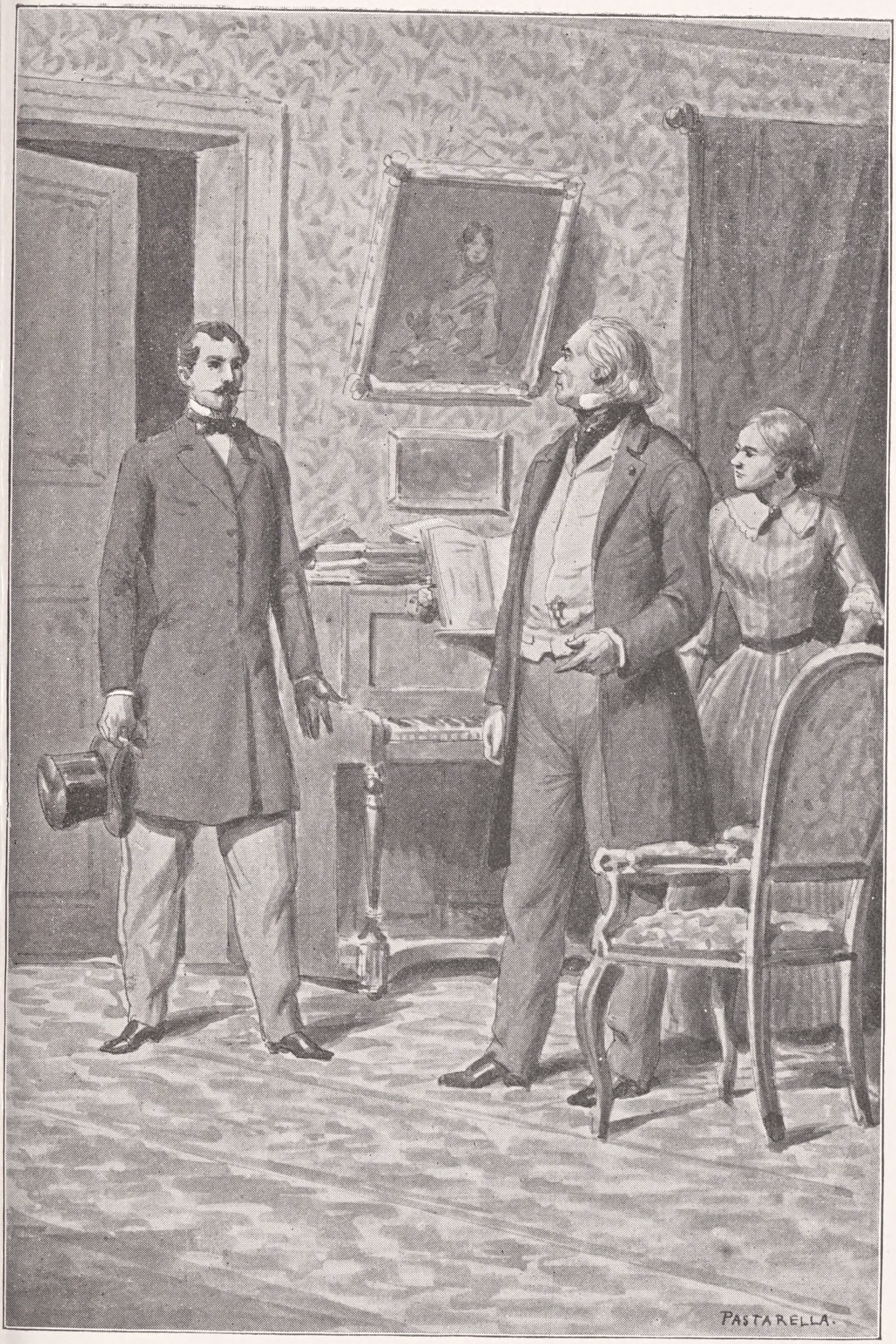
The young man stretched out his arm as if to bar the way to his father.

"I beg of you, sir, not to come with me. That would only make me ridiculous!"

"Ridiculous!" Count Besnard fell back, half fainting; a dizziness had come over him. His legs refused to bear him; the blood whizzed in his ears; he felt his heart shrinking; it was an agonizing moment. With a violent effort he recovered himself, and even had the courage to smile.

"This is a pretty harsh word, my son; but be it so, I shall remain! I have no wish to make you ridiculous."

A painful silence followed the sharp reproof.


PASTARELLA.

Marcel was the first to speak, but this time it was in solemn tones.

"I am going to fight, father, and punish an insulter. May I dare to ask you a question?"

"A question, Marcel? I listen."

"Father, what crime had the Italian, Savelli, committed?"

The old man looked at his son. "Savelli? What do you wish me to tell you about him? It is an old story, very sad, and pretty well known."

"No; not known as it ought to be! I was in Paris, far from you, when it happened—this terrible story. You never thought it best to speak to me about it; I know of it only through hearsay—all lies and calumnies! Oh, out of pity, sir, tell me; what had this unfortunate Savelli done?"

Count Besnard did not answer at once. For a few seconds his hand went back and forth from his forehead to his eyes, as if he tried to collect his thoughts. Finally he straightened up:

"Then you, too—you doubt, my son!" he exclaimed. "Well, then, listen! After the deliverance which the 'Coup d'état' of the second of December secured for us all, there was a disturbance in the South. Bands of rioters—real brigands, they were—scoured the country. They entered villages, plundered

houses, burned churches; they were nothing but vagabonds! At that time I was Prosecutor-General of that particular circuit, and I was chosen to preside at a Joint Commission. Orders from Paris requested me to use the severest measures, and my duty forbade all weakness. So, severe I was. Among those people, some had simply been led into this trouble; for them, I showed myself merciful; but there were in this gang many criminals, leaders of civil wars, troublesome anarchists, despisers of social laws, blasphemers of eternal laws; toward those I was merciless. One of those bands had for its chief a certain Scipione Savelli—a Mazzinian and a political refugee, who had been under watch for a long time. He had no country he could call his own—that cosmopolitan revolutionist, dealing in riots and wholesale murders. As all his kind did, he wished dishonor and destruction to our France—I mean monarchial and Christian France, the great France of our ancestors—I dared not spare him. He was caught standing on a barricade, from where he had just shot down two of our soldiers with his own hands. The officers in command had him shot right there, but, somehow, he survived his wounds. Then ——"

Brutus Besnard stopped; perhaps he did not dare finish.

"Then they shot him a second time!" stammered Marcel, bending his head.

"Yes, a second time!" cried the former Prosecutor-General, vehemently, "for had he not killed twice? Oh! I know, I know, the humble life of our soldiers, what is that compared to the priceless existence of those sublime 'liberators of humanity?' Let the riot of June annihilate a whole army — the executioners are cheered to the skies. But let one dare to touch these gentlemen of the anarchist clubs—abomination of abominations! Martyrs, all! If, on the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle an unfortunate regiment be chosen as a target for the bullets of the insurgents, that's all right and just; but let our soldiers dare to defend themselves, and let them shoot back, that is infamous! Ah! but such is not my view of things, and my conscience is not that of a writer of libels. Scipione Savelli had killed. He was killed. He wished to overthrow France; France had to dispose of him. Don't touch the holy ark, gentlemen—it is death! I applied to him the eternal law: *retaliation* which the evangelist himself approves of—I regret nothing."

"Shot a second time!" repeated Marcel.

"Like many others," pursued Brutus Besnard, "I might have easily played the comedy of Pontius Pilate—wash my hands and say: 'The

court-martial has condemned; let it be responsible!' I have not wished to do so. I myself ardently solicited the sentence; I insisted on the execution. It was I, truly, who have done justice. Oh! they know it well, the 'brothers and friends,' the members of the secret societies. From that day their hate broke loose against me; they cast insults upon insults at me; they subjected me to all sorts of outrages. But what is their sting to me, since my conscience has never reproached me? For five years, at all hours, I have communed with God; and not once has that God responded to me: 'the blood cries out against thee!' No; I can verily say I regret nothing!"

He stopped speaking; the son also kept silent. Then, stretching out his arms, the old man of justice took a crucifix, placed it on the table, and presented it to Marcel:

"Deny it not; thou hast lied to me. Your duel is to be a mortal combat; I feel it; I know it. Before the end of the day, perhaps, he who bears my name—the object of my great love, my child, my poor child—will have been stricken in defense of his father's honor. Now, look. Here is my Master, the Judge who condemns or absolves judges. On the cross that bore Him, I put my hand, and I repeat: I have done my duty; I regret nothing!"

Silence succeeded again after this supreme

objurgation. Slowly Marcel Besnard approached his father; kneeling before him, he kissed his hand.

"Pardon me, father," he whispered. "I also have doubted."

The old man embraced his son again and again. Finally, he said, speaking in slow, impressive accents:

"Go, dear son; fulfill thy duty towards me, as I believe to have fulfilled mine towards my country; and on this day let God judge me."

The young man raised himself with bright eyes and a happy face.

"He shall judge us both, father, for I shall return to you victorious! Now it is time for me to go."

Count Besnard accompanied Marcel as far as the door of his chamber; then pressed him to his bosom a long time.

"Know," said he, "that if you die, I die!"

The door of his retreat had hardly closed, than the unfortunate "Count Brutus" leaned unsteadily against the wall. He shuddered as with a chill; perspiration stood on his brow, and all the objects in the room began to whirl before him, very gently at first, then quicker, then whirling frightfully.

"Savelli!" gasped he. "Ah! Savelli!" and he fell in a dead swoon.

VI

MARIE-ANNE

ALREADY Marcel Besnard had gone down rapidly two-thirds of the stairs, when he heard a supplicating voice calling him back. It was Marie-Anne, the frail, lame sister, who was trying to catch up with him.

"Marcel! Marcel!"

Her voice was so full of tears that the young man stopped short, moved by her entreaties.

When she was near, she said in a voice full of anguish:

"You were going away, without having even said good-bye to me!"

He stooped down and kissed her on the forehead, saying:

"Do not cry, little one! This duel is only fun for me. Besides, it is not my first encounter, you know, and I handle a pistol pretty well; your brother has a fine record among the best Parisian marksmen. I shall make the shot tell, this time; the impertinent fellow will receive what he deserves; and I shall be back to dinner with a good appetite. Order something good for to-night."

He spoke cheerfully, as if his mind was per-

fectly free from any anxiety, as if he were going to a place of amusement; but a slight tremor moved his lips. Though very brave, the beloved brother felt his heart beating. Would he come back, or be brought back?

"Marcel! Marcel!" repeated Marie-Anne, unable to utter another word.

Once more he pressed her hands, and ran down the last flight of stairs.

On the avenue in front of the mansion a carriage was in attendance; through her open window Marie-Anne noticed two gentlemen, who seemed to be waiting impatiently; her brother's seconds, no doubt. At the first glance, the lame girl recognized them; the young M. de Gravenoire, with his beard well trimmed; and old Baron La Chesnaye, with his arched nose, long mustache, and scanty hair against his temples. Those gentlemen bowed to her, and Marcel having stepped into the carriage, it drove away rapidly.

A cold, harsh November wind was blowing; the old trees were dropping their last rusty leaves; dark clouds hung in the atmosphere, and a few snowflakes were beginning to whiten the dusty pavement.

Immovable, bareheaded, Marie-Anne was still looking. The carriage had disappeared for sometime, and Marie-Anne stood there, as in a trance.

The voice of one of the servants drew her away from this silent contemplation.

"Mademoiselle, you are covered with snow! You will be ill."

The young girl shook her garments, withdrew her head and allowed the window to be closed.

Madamoiselle Marie-Anne's room was very different from that which her father's proud humility enjoyed; it was charmingly decorated; all white and blue.

Count Besnard had himself chosen his daughter's furniture; the silk plush curtains and portieres, the armchairs and sofa, white and azure, and especially the bed, where he thought, the child would rest under the open wings of a guardian angel. It was he who had filled the shelves of her little bookcase with religious books; he who had placed in a discreet shadow the praying stool from where, in the morning when getting up, and in the evening at bedtime, the soul of the girl kneeling on it, went up to heaven; this holy-water cup of brilliant onyx, this crucifix in a velvet frame, were presents from the old father; and, on the mantelpiece over a cheerful fire was his last gift: the good Lady of La Salette, the virgin of the little shepherds. There she was, in her queer attire, this mysterious apparition, looking so sad, so loving, and as if saying: "The hand of

my Son is heavy; I can no longer hold it back."

Marie-Anne entered this dainty retreat and her eyes avoided looking at the Merciful Christ or at the Mother of all sufferers. She walked towards the window and painfully sat down by her writing desk, where she remained for some-time motionless. Finally she took a sheet of paper and blushing feverishly, she began to write:

"*To my Father:*—I Marcel is killed to-day I shall not survive him. I wish to die.

"I implore the pardon of Jesus and of the Holy Virgin; on my knees, I beg your pardon, my father.

"Knowing that I am for all an object of scorn and repulsion, I have suffered a great deal, and I cannot suffer any longer.

"I leave all my money to the Institution of the Good Shepherd. I shall have so much need of prayers! I ——"

She stopped and let fall her pen.

"Miserable girl!" she cried. "Oh! miserable, miserable girl!"

With a scared gesture, Marie-Anne went to the fire, threw into it the wretched letter, and kindled the flame, so that the acknowledgment of her despair was soon nothing but ashes.

The praying-stool then seemed to attract her attention. She seized the rosary which hung

on the wall, and began a prayer: "Our Father, who art in the heavens, hallowed——" but she stopped there, and, looking at the crucifix, she cried, in a hoarse whisper: "So you have deigned to create me homely, deformed, ridiculous; and that did not suffice. In this infirm body, out of kindness, you have wished to place the heart of a wretch; and I call you 'Our Father!'"

She stopped again and resumed her prayers: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the——" Suddenly, "Enough," she said, getting up, "I do not believe; I do not! How can I believe?"

Her eyes shone, her face took an almost sinister expression. And while saying these words, she had opened her bookcase, and was stealthily slipping her hand in it.

There, on the shelves, was a first row of pious books, such as *Imitations of the Holy Virgin*, *Marie's Rose Bushes* and *Guides to a Good Death*. She put them aside and brought forward a book which had been carefully hidden behind: probably some volume stolen from Count Besnard's collection. The pages in some places showed that they had been read, reread, meditated upon and understood.

After making sure that the door was closed and bolted, Marie-Anne went towards the window, stretched her emaciated body on an armchair, opened at random the forbidden book and commenced reading:

"I perceived one day that my sister lost her health and rest. She was getting thin, her eyes were sunken, her walk languid and her voice faltering. One day I found her all in tears, kneeling before a crucifix. Company, solitude, my absence, my presence, night, day, everything alarmed her. Involuntary sighs would escape her lips; sometimes she could endure a long walk without getting tired; at other times she could scarcely drag herself about. She would take up, and then drop, her work, open a book and not read it; she would begin a sentence which was never finished; would finally melt in tears and retire to pray."

Marie-Anne stopped reading; she shuddered; a sudden blush spread over her pale features; her large blue eyes, circled with black, shone strangely. "Yes, that's what it is!" she murmured. "Alas! it is too true!"

She closed the book and remained, for a few moments, still and thoughtful.

"Oh!" she said, at last, clasping her hands, "may God have pity on me!"

Nevertheless, she reopened the book, turned a few leaves and began to read again.

"A wife, my brother, and children would occupy your mind. And what woman would not try to render you happy? Your loving heart, your noble and affectionate manner, your proud and tender eyes; everything would make

her true to you. Ah! With what delight she would embrace you in her arms! All her thoughts and looks would be yours; would soothe your troubles. She would be all love and innocence in your presence; you would think you had found a sister again."

"Found a sister again! Oh, no!" she said with rage. "No; I prefer him as he is—courting all women, rather than to have him love one—one which would not be myself!" And suddenly, Marie-Anne raising her head, saw her own image reflected in the mirror. Yes, here she was, with her pale face, her repulsive homeliness, her nose too short, her mouth too large, her lips too thick. She saw herself, and a smile of derision and desolation made her homeliness almost grotesque.

"René's sister, at least, was beautiful, and she could be loved!" stammered the unfortunate girl; "but I, oh! I, with the blood of the sacrilegious renegade in my veins; I, the granddaughter of the priest and the actress!"

At that moment a discreet knock at the door startled her. She threw the book under a piece of furniture and hurried to open.

"Come quickly, mademoiselle," cried Count Besnard's servant; "your father has fainted away!"

VII

TWO PISTOL SHOTS

ON the broad highway which leads to Saint-Germain, passing through Garche and Vaucresson the carriage was driving rapidly. The sky had been cleared of clouds, and the snow by the roadside was shining in the sun like diamond dust. They seemed to be having a jolly time inside that carriage. The two gentlemen, La Chesnaye and Gravenoire, smoked and talked, their minds as placid as if they had been going to some fine repast at the *Maison d'or*, or to some reception in the Pigalle quarter. Marcel Besnard was more reserved, almost taciturn. He occupied the back seat with the jolly Chamberlain; in front of them sat Gravenoire with a solemn looking individual, the doctor. On the lap of Gravenoire rested a mahogany box containing the pistols. The Chamberlain, Baron de La Chesnaye, felt in a talkative mood, and told no end of risky anecdotes and doubtful puns:

"Ah! dear friend," said he to Marcel, "what a dismal pleasure a duel is! You are going to play the principal part, you fortunate man,

while we are but figureheads! Are you pleased with those pistols?"

He opened the box and took out bran-new arms:

"Good pistols, as was agreed. I chose them with hard triggers, the safety finger pull! So, nothing to fear on that score."

"So much the worse," replied Marcel; "I would like to give that man a lesson that would prove useful in the present and in the future."

Gravenoire remarked:

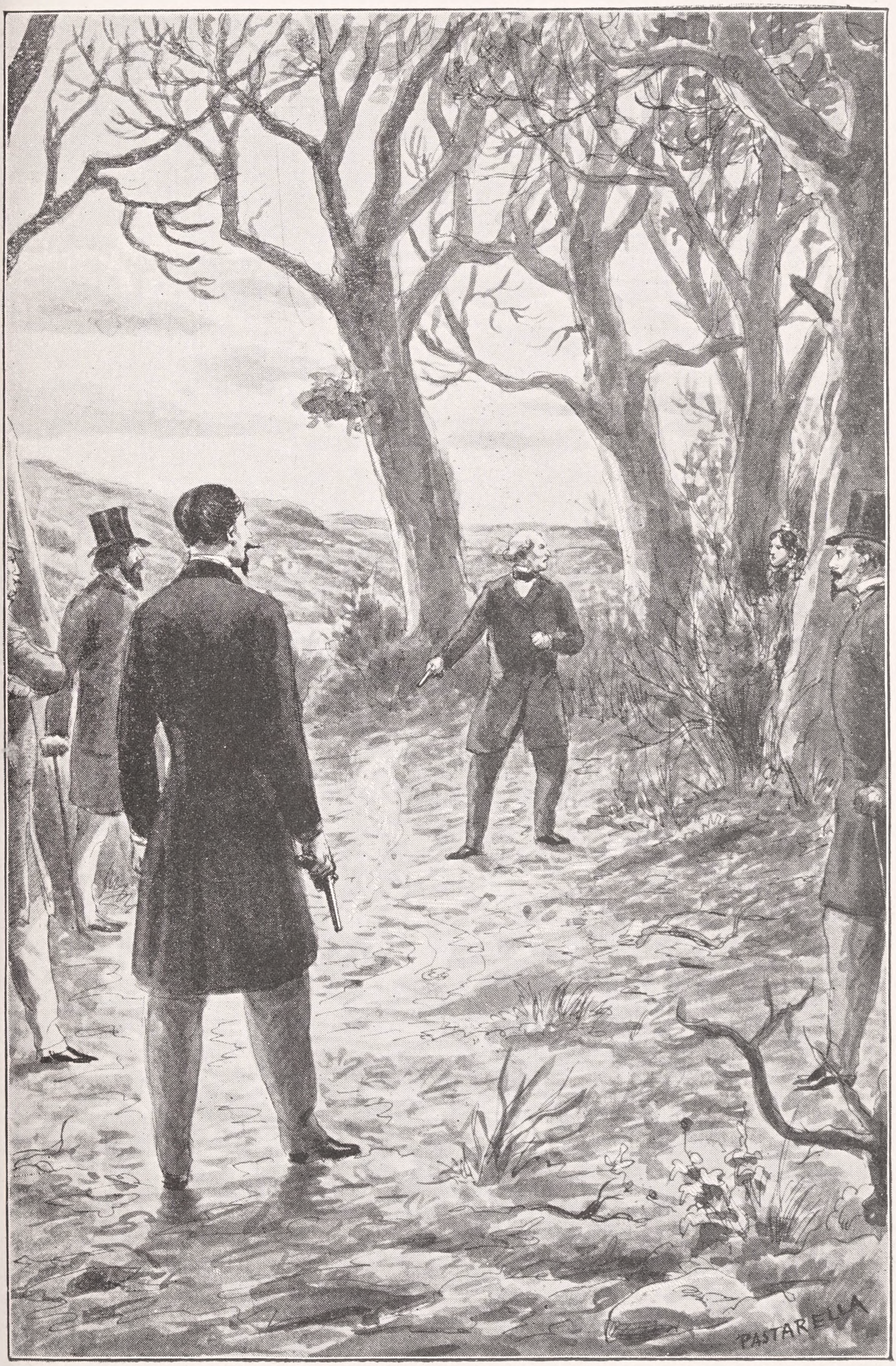
"We had prepared an explanatory note for the society papers. Our adversaries objected to the way it was worded, and, as after all, they are the attacked party——"

"What kind of men are the seconds of the Prince?" interrupted Marcel.

"Italians," said La Chesnaye; "one with a name ending in *a*, Count Canossa, I think——"

"Good Lombard nobility!" supplemented Gravenoire.

"And a man in *i*, *Il Signor Traventi.* Ah! *per Bacco!* what a man, a real clown, that one! Would you believe it, but this morning when we came together to settle this affair, I I thought I recognized in this man (but I was mistaken, of course,) an old acquaintance of mine, an Italian who served in the foreign corps, when I was the commander of a battalion. His name was Marino; a good-for-nothing,


PASTARELLA

who in some way or other managed to become a sergeant; but one day he ran away and went to join Mazzini in Rome."

While chatting in that way they had reached a certain cross-road named the Hubies; at that place one of the highways led towards Celle-Saint-Cloud and Bougival. The brilliant baron put his head out of the window: "Well, there, wasn't I telling you so? We are late! The others are waiting for us."

In fact, in front of an inn, a carriage was standing, and two gentlemen impatiently walked to and fro.

"The seconds of the adversary!" said Gravenoire. "I am going to give them the proper directions: it will be best for them to follow us."

He jumped out and ran up to the other party. "Well, well! what do I see over there?" said La Chesnaye, with his head still out of the window: "The deuce! what a handsome coupé! a blooded horse; tasteful livery! and the shades down! I suspect a love affair."

The younger nobleman was already back.

"Whose carriage is this?" asked the inquisitive Chamberlain. "You, the lord of these parts, you ought to know."

"I am sorry to say I don't! Forward!" this to the coachman.

A few minutes later, their carriage was driv-

ing through a gate and along the avenue of a park.

"This is the place! This is my place," said Monsieur de Gravenoire, who ordered the coachman to stop. The four alighted, and almost at once the second carriage arrived.

Accompanied by both his seconds, Prince di Carpegna stepped out of it; he had also brought a physician along. The two parties exchanged the customary bows; then under the guidance of Gravenoire, the little group penetrated the thicket. Soon they came to a large open space surrounded with immense horsechestnuts. Made bare by the bites of the first frost, these trees had covered the soil with their damp leaves, and their mossy branches seemed to writhe with suffering. From this opening, one could look over a great distance on a sad landscape: the Seine running at the foot of the Bougival hill, with its wrinkled and shivering waters, lighted by a cold November sun; to the left, was a superposition of woods and gardens decked with last, discolored leaves, and behind all this winter's rust, one could distinguish the arches of the aqueduct of Marly covered with ice. Opposite was the city of Saint Germain, with its white houses crowned with the bluish spirals of their smoke; then, beyond, in the ashy gray of the horizon, were the indistinct forms of the hills drowned

in vapors. This whole part of the country, valleys, islands, villages, so noisy on summer evenings, was now mournful and melancholy. The sun was rapidly going down, and the red hues of its disk permeated the mist rising from the river. Everywhere already, the heavy silence of days coming to an end without any song from the birds; everywhere the heavy lethargy of winter.

Yes, Marcel Besnard had told his father a positive lie; this meeting was to be a serious affair, and the duel promised to be one of the most dangerous on record.

Prince di Carpegna, having been struck in public, had had the right of dictating the conditions; they were that the adversaries should be placed twenty paces apart, with permission to take five steps ahead, and for one minute, to aim before firing. Assuredly, one or the other, both perhaps, were to fall.

The seconds unanimously chose La Chesnaye to direct operations; it was not an easy office, for it was difficult to walk on this thick layer of slippery leaves. But the doughty baron had gone through worse than that.

Taking long strides, he counted twenty paces, marked the place where the combatants were to stand at the beginning, and then, with his cane, traced the boundary lines. Fate gave Marcel Besnard the choice of weapons.

These preliminaries being settled, each one took his stand, the seconds and doctors in a row at the side. "Ready, gentlemen!" cried La Chesnaye, with his most sonorous and commanding voice. "Go!" Marcel Besnard advanced, stretched out his hand, and fired.

Touched! Prince di Carpegna, shot in the groin, staggered. Still he braced up. Slowly, scarcely able to drag himself, he walked to the boundary line; slowly he lowered his pistol and aimed at Marcel Besnard.

Marcel, very calm, had crossed his arms.

"Fire! Why don't you fire!" cried Gravenoire.

"Fire! confound it!" howled Baron La Chesnaye.

Carpegna was about pulling the trigger, when a slight rustle in the bushes took away his attention. He looked and then smiled, a quiet, strange smile.

Raising his arm he fired at random. Suddenly he fell to the ground in a swoon.

The seconds hurried, leaned over his body, and the doctor examined the wound. The prince had some bone crushed and was losing a great deal of blood; the ball had disappeared in the lower abdomen.

"He must be taken to my cottage," M. de Gravenoire said. "I have had a room prepared."

"It is not wanted, my dear sir," answered Signor Traventi. "If his lordship could speak, he would refuse it."

"But he will never be able to endure the journey. That would be killing him."

The Italian doctor appeared rather perplexed, and insisted on accepting Gravenoire's offer.

"A dangerous wound," he muttered; "very, very bad."

"No matter," Traventi answered, in violent tones, "we must carry him off."

Already, the other second of the Prince had started to go and called the carriage. The surgeon applied a first dressing; then, every one helping, they raised the wounded man, and succeeded, with a great deal of trouble, in reaching the avenue where they stretched him on the cushions of the carriage; the three Italians crowding around him who was still unconscious. "*Andiamo! Andiamo*," they repeated, and the carriage went on its way, like a funeral.

Standing in the middle of the road, Marcel's friends were looking at the cortége, disappearing in the mist.

"Gentlemen," said the French doctor, "let us uncover our heads before this hearse. It will bring to Paris a corpse."

VIII

LA SAVELLI

SURPRISED and thoughful, Viscount Besnard had remained behind; M. de Gravenoire went to him.

"A good shot, my dear fellow; **bravo!** But what a strange duel! It reminds me of the famous, romantic duel by a Russian writer, —you know, *the shot* of Pouchkine."

"Yes, I remember," said Marcel, little by little recovering his self-possession; "this duel where the aggrieved party faces his adversary's bullet and keeps his for a better opportunity. We shall see!"

"Gentlemen," cried La Chesnaye, lighting his twentieth cigar, "night is coming fast and we are hungry. I move that we go and celebrate the victory in a fine supper at the *Maison d'Or*."

"No! **here** ends my part in this affair," answered Marcel; "I am hurrying to my father."

They walked out of the park, and soon Marcel Besnard and his seconds entered their carriage.

At that moment, a woman could have been

seen cautiously gliding out of the thicket, now plunged in darkness. She took her stand in the middle of the road, looked at the fast disappearing carriage, and, with a nervous laugh and theatrical gesture, she said in a loud voice:

"Fool, who allowed himself to be killed! A real suicide, nothing more! Fool! Well, we have to settle this between us, Brutus Besnard! between us—you, the *White Butcher!*"

Her coupé was waiting for her at a cross-road and she hurriedly walked toward it.

"We go back to Passy," she said to the coachman. But a little farther she commanded him to stop.

A café, a third-class, suburban place, was lighted up and showed its sign. The woman entered and asked for pen and ink; and there, in this low place, filled with tobacco-smoke, she wrote on a visiting card the following lines:

To Monsieur le Vicomte Marcel Besnard:

I was there; I saw it all, and without a moment's delay and on the very spot where the duel took place, I dare to write you. You have punished his insults and avenged your father. It is one's clear duty to avenge one's father. If the Des Jardins street, my retreat in Passy, does not seem to you the end of the world, come and see me. I expect you.

Rosina, born Countess d' A'Prata,

At last free!

PART THE SECOND.

I

HISTORY OF A LORDLY RESIDENCE

THE highway which leads from Havre to Abbeville is perhaps the most monotonously straight line the genius of our modern civil engineering ever conceived. Between the valley of Fecamp and the ravine of Cany, this road, parallel with the sea, and but at a little distance from it, crosses the plateau of the Cauchois cliffs, through a despairingly uninteresting country. In December the winds sweep the whole of this elevation, and both northwest and northeast winds pelt it with either rain or snow; in July the sun scorches there, and the Normand carts roll, unprotected by any shade, in the dust and amidst swarms of insects. When fall comes, after the harvest, one sees nothing but plowed fields, where trefoil grows between the furrows. Here and there oxen are asleep in the clover, while innumerable crows alight to pick up the worms in the newly tilled earth. A few settlements are to be seen in the dim distance; isolated hamlets, looking like reefs in the midst of a calm ocean. There, no doubt, sad or joyous, must be life behind those rows of big trees; but everywhere else the space is mo-

notonous to a degree, and "ennui" weighs heavily.

At about nine miles from the small town of Cany, and opposite an inn, with these words upon its weather-beaten signs: "*To the Tranquil Heart! Pure-blooded cider!*" begins a narrow road, which, leading to the seacoast soon ends at Sasseville.

This community of Sasseville is a homely borough, full of petty conceit on account of its brand new church and city hall, full of political cafés, where the Normand, who is very fond of his dram, can drink and discuss all he cares to. This big village, *Sassototum apud Caletas*, according to its archeological vicar, enjoys a certain renown in the surrounding country; not certainly on account of its ancient origin, evidently Gallo-Roman; but on account of its much-frequented fowl market. Besides, Sasseville prides itself upon its castle.

Long ago this castle was considered magnificent; it was really the jewel of the Mauconduit estates. Under Louis XVI, however, these "lords" of Sasseville had so unluckily tackled the God of Chance and so much borrowed from the Jews, that finally their creditors had obtained a decree against them. The consequence was that the castle had to be given up. The Revolution came and completed the ruin of the poor château, by declaring it national property,

and changing its chapel into a storage place for feed. Then the Republic had parted with it and sold it to the highest bidder. Oh, it went off for very little—scarcely one million francs—in frightfully depreciated paper money, too; besides, as soon as it was bought it was sold again — from a Jacobin to a Thermidorian. From bad to worse!

The Empire had brought back a few happy days for Sasseville. Rebuilt by its new owner, in a superb Greco Percier style, the castle, from that time on, presented an imposing appearance, a goodly pile of stone and brick, a monumental reality.

A park with shady winding paths surrounded it, and nowhere, a hundred leagues around, could one find broader lawns. At that time, when guitar and clavecin were the fashion, its beauties inspired many a rural poet.

During the first few years of the Restoration, this former "national property" belonged to a notable citizen of Yvetot, a certain Evariste Pousset, manufacturer of cotton goods, and one of the kings of this country of popular kings.

It was about that time that Henri de Saint-Simon, who was not yet a prophet, kept asking that France should be regenerated by industry and "industrialism;" he had even invented this fine word. It was the time when the *Constitutionel* was preaching the double alliance of the

old feudal throne with "the laurels of Victory and the olive branch of Peace." In Sasseville, they approved of those ideas and understood this prose. Besides Monsieur Pousset was a republican, proudly calling himself "the son of his work," or "a self-made man," or "his own ancestor;" he sang Beranger and admired Laffitte.

On the other side, this enemy of feudal ignorance ardently wished to ennoble his daughter, and, on a certain summer day, Mademoiselle Hortense Pousset became Countess Brutus Besnard; then, this marriage consummated, the good man, who was his own ancestor, had gone to join his real forefathers, and the chapel at Sasseville was turned into a gothic tomb.

For twelve years, Countess Besnard, a small, sickly, deformed person, had followed her husband's fortunes as a judge, wearied and wearisome. She had given him two children; but, as there is an end to everything in this world, she, too, had gone to join her father, and become the second inmate of the tomb at Sasseville under the gothic ogives.

In dividing her dowry, the Castle and its surroundings had fallen to the lot of the only son and heir, Monsieur le Vicomte Louis-Désiré-Marcel Besnard.

One may guess what a great commotion shook to the foundations the pious parishes of

Cany and Valmont, when, in the month of August, 1857, Viscount Marcel Besnard, who had been so far a model of propriety, came on a protracted visit to his estate, accompanied by a woman.

As he was yet a bachelor, and as in the surrounding manors there were plenty of mothers in possession of marriageable daughters, these began to circulate right away the most unpleasant rumors. The young man who was thought so charming, such a fine dancer, so unusually intelligent, and with a magnificent future before him, was suddenly transformed—according to public gossip—into an ill-shaped, stupid voluptuary, incapable of succeeding in any career. It was worse yet when people heard that the "creature" who was installed at the castle, was an Italian, a princess and a widow—widowed from a husband whom the cynical Viscount had killed. What a dreadful scandal! No respectable citizen noticed the guilty couple; the worst jokes concerning them had full sway; calumny followed suit in the cafés of Sasseville, the Normand boys devoted to them their riskiest songs, and even the archeological-inclined vicar was heard quoting from some old classic:

"Ah! how does one dare inherit from him he has assassinated?"

II

DANTE'S INFERNO, V. 106

YES, indeed, Viscount Besnard had not been long collecting, for his own benefit, the conjugal inheritance the man he had killed left behind him. The very day following the eventful duel, the young assessor had received a letter, in a slender and graceful writing, postmarked "Vaucresson," and reading as follows:

"You have punished his insults and avenged your father. It is one's clear duty to avenge one's father. If the Des Jardins street, my retreat in Passy, does not seem to you the end of the world, come and see me. I expect you." Signed: "*Rosina, born Countess d A'Prata,* at last free."

At last free! Ah! woman, woman! and three days later—he did observe the proprieties to that extent—Marcel, climbing the hill of Passy, rang the bell at the door of "the retreat."

It was a very elegant retreat, even too luxurious for a truly respectable woman. But are not all Italians fond of show and bright colors? She looked so confiding, this lovely daughter of Lombardy. Imprudent, perhaps, but really so

honest at heart. Marcel was sure of it now, for she had confided in him."

At the first meeting, the princess had told him her whole history; a painful history full of commonplace realities. When quite young, almost a child, they had married her out of ambition, to an old, depraved, whimsically wicked man, a former *Carbonaro*, a bloodthirsty, ferocious beast.

"I, too," she said with her eyes full of tears, "I might, like so many others, have had a lover. I could have chosen among a score of ardent admirers; but the Holy Virgin, and especially the memory of my pious and saintly mother, kept me in the right path. She had never known love. Oh! to know love! Poor woman!"

And, the next day, Marcel was back in the Rue des Jardins; the day after that, he was there again—and then——

Then, he had taken her into his own house, his Rosina—all to himself, in the solitude of his castle now peopled by her, among the flowery bushes, rocked by the murmur of the neighboring sea. He loved, loved wildly with his whole passionate heart. But she?

At times, he found her strangely sad and quiet, as if grieving over something. "I love you," she would say, "and I despise and hate myself!" No doubt, she felt her position, was

cruelly disturbed by remorse, religious scruples, what not?

Marcel decided then that they should marry as quickly as possible; but he did not tell her so. He thought he must first silence calumny.

Still, calumny did not trouble him much; its voice never reached him. He lived in solitude, made no calls, gave up all pleasures, wrapped up in his love.

But she imitated not his reserve; she had no modesty, no discretion. She was a true Italian; intelligent, educated, but full of the silliest superstitions. She showed it on all occasions.

One evening, seated near the lamp, they were translating Alighieri's immortal poem and, in the *Inferno*, the episode of Francesca; they had come to this memorable line, the finest, perhaps, of the divine poet:

Love, who never allows the loved one not to love.

Suddenly she grabbed the book, closed it violently and threw it away.

And, as Marcel was looking at her, bewildered: "Dante is right," she muttered; "love is a cursed contagion!"

Then she added, in a still lower voice: "Ah! *mio caro!* you must not read the last line!"

But he picked up the book, and knew enough Italian to translate the line himself; it ran thus:

Love has led us both to the same death.

III

THE COMPACT

ON that day, September the third, the Notary of Sasseville came up to the château and cast a shadow over the serenity of the infatuated one's bliss.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, when the solemn little man, after going through the castle in search of the couple, strolled through the park, and, at the end of a long, straight path, saw Marcel and Madame di Carpegna walking slowly arm in arm, as is the lovers' wont. He hurried to catch up with them. When Marcel heard him coming, he turned around and could not repress a gesture of ill humor.

"Ah! is that you, my dear sir?" he exclaimed. "What happy thought turned your steps this way?"

"Excuse my intruding, Monsieur le Vicomte," replied the solemn country lawyer, Varincourt by name. "I have here an important communication which concerns you; a letter to read to you, from the Councilor of State himself."

"From my father?" cried Marcel, astonished. "Let us sit down, then. I listen to you."

Not far from them was a rustic bench, where the three took seats. Oscar Varincourt spread on his lap a portfolio full of papers, straightened up his face, and said:

"Have you not, my dear sir, lately written to Monsieur le Comte Besnard?"

"I have done so, to make him acquainted with my firm resolution to marry the Princess di Carpegna."

"That was wasted ink, Marcel," interrupted the young woman.

"The Councilor of State has been pleased to honor me with a letter," said the Notary, "and I bring you his answer to your communication."

"His answer? Sent to you, and not to me?"

"I regret it, Monsieur le Vicomte, but here it is," and M. Varincourt handed him a paper, already numbered, stamped, classified, everything according to law, for the little man was well acquainted with the book entitled "The Perfect Notary."

Very much agitated, Marcel took the paper and began reading aloud, while Rosina, her head leaning on her lover's shoulder, listened, smiling, with her eyes half closed, forgetting the presence of a stranger, of an official personage, grown gray in public service.

This letter, hard and curt, read thus:

SIR: One of your clients, M. Marcel Besnard, has just notified me of his intention to marry. I have, many a time, let that young man know how much his recent behavior grieved and astonished me; but, as neither requests nor reprimands have put a stop to such a painful scandal, I have had to break off all intercourse with my son. Be kind enough, therefore, to act as my interpreter; and to take him my answer; this answer, here it is:

Formerly, a man of honor would have had scruples to marry the widow of a man who insulted his family, a man he has punished and killed in a duel. The insult, as well as the bloodshed, would have placed an abyss between his love and his honor. New times, new morals it seems. As for me, I stand by the old rules. If M. Marcel's conscience makes itself heard no longer, it belongs to his father to speak to him firmly and plainly.

Being unwilling to become the accomplice of such a disreputable act, I refuse—once for all—to give my consent. Your client is free to do without it; but, then, I require the formal legal notices; I demand them, I must have them.

Besides, you can tell my son that he shall not have long to wait; I feel very old, and he knows I am very ill.

Please, sir, to accept my regards.

COUNT BESNARD.

"*Via vecchietto!*" sighed the young woman, preserving her careless attitude.

As to Marcel, he kept silent, and nervously fidgeted with his cane on the grass of the lawn.

"What do you decide doing?" continued M. Varincourt. "This is certainly explicit enough; a refusal from your father, and he calls for the formal notices spoken of in section 152 of the

Code Napoleon. Will you risk to have those notices sent him? I know, in Paris, a very obliging colleague; I am going to write to him. Besides Madame la Princesse, born d' A'Prata, must kindly place me in relation with her lawyer in Italy. I shall need certain papers which——"

"Oh! dear me, what fuss," interrupted Rosine; "why not also Juliette's poison to unite me to my Romeo? Well, now, if I may say my say, it shall be—no. I will have none of this. I prefer waiting."

She had pronounced the word "waiting" with such a vibrating tone of hatred that the son of Count Besnard turned quite pale.

"I will think over the matter," he finally said, "and let you know before long. Come back, one of these days, my dear sir."

The careful Varincourt picked up the catalogued paper, placed it back in his portfolio, and tucked the portfolio under his arm; then rose, bowed twice and soon his silhouette disappeared at a turning of the walk.

The lovers were alone again.

"What folly, Marcel!" impetuously cried Madame di Carpegna. "What is the use of this marriage?"

"It must take place, my Rosina! Our position is getting more awkward every day."

"Oh! what is the sense of those tardy

scruples? Would you love me more once married?"

"Certainly not; but I would have you here, and mine forever!"

She looked at him fixedly, and the smile died on her lips:

"Forever? Well! I know of a more indissoluble tie than marriage—it's death. When a loved one deceives you, kill him or her; then kill yourself."

A prolonged silence followed and added its stress to this passionate declaration.

"Be it so," said Marcel Besnard. "I agree to it. Remember the day and hour; I shall never forget them."

IV

THE WILD ROSE

THE day was coming to a close—a September day, still warm and bright; but already, the vapors of autumnal evenings were rising from the ground, hiding the azure of the sky. The park was being invaded by a sleepy peace and invited one to thoughtfulness. Not a movement among the branches; no rustling among the leaves. The sun was going down, lengthening the shadows of the big trees; and, in its long rays, shivering insects, old after a summer's existence, were having their last sport. Under the thickets, it was almost dark and, on the grass, the dewdrops resembled pearls. Slowly Marcel and his *inamorata* were walking lovingly, silent in the midst of silence, over the moss and among the tall ferns.

When they reached the very top of the plateau, just before the declivity, they stopped. In front of them was spread the valley of the Dalles, with all the peculiar melancholy of that landscape.

At that time it was nothing but a wild ravine, a solitude between two cliffs covered with trees, reeds and heather. Beyond, one

could see the ocean shining under the sun; first, there was the foam of its waves covering the shore; then a line of reefs dotting with black the dark-green of its waves; finally, an immensity of blue sky.

Gently the young woman drew herself from her lover.

"Oh! what a beautiful autumn evening!" she cried; "and what an admirable country is your France!"

"Why 'your France,' my Rosina?" asked her companion. "Is it not henceforth yours also, this country of mine?"

She shook her head:

"I know, I know; 'Thy God will be my God, your people my people, your country my country;' but I will remain myself. Oh!" she went on, "what an admirable country is your France! and how hateful, too! Formerly 'the lady among nations;' a despicable woman to-day!"

"A line from Dante!" replied Marcel untouched by the bitter taunt; "but Dante was speaking of your Italy."

"My Italy? She, too, is a vile creature, a galley slave! But Italy, at least, may yet curse—and weep!"

"Rosina," interrupted the young man, trying to put a stop to this painful subject, "rather than insult what is strong and noble,

tell me of yourself, of your relatives, of your Romagna, you love so dearly. Recite to me once more the song of your favorite poet, the verses of Leopardi, *Italia*."

"No," she answered, excitedly; "not that one—another."

She took a few steps away from him to assume the desired attitude ; then turned around, with a theatrical gesture.

Standing at the top of the hillock, her graceful form outlined against the ashy-grey of the twilight, her hair loosened, her whole pose tragic to a degree, la Savelli began. And he, the son of Count Besnard, fascinated, lost in the contemplation of this being who deprived him of his reason as well as of his honor, listened to her harmonious and passionate voice.

She recited one of the most famous among Young Italy's poems of hate, where France, at first praised to the skies, ends by being dragged into the mire.

"What an abominable insult, and what furious hatred!" cried Marcel, deeply offended. "Who wrote those odious verses?"

Rosina Savelli took another melodramatic attitude. "My father!" she said.

"That father of whom you always avoid speaking to me, my friend? Well, his Italian jealousy has calumniated in vain ; what is im-

mortal cannot die! Why did not your father love France?"

"He? He loved her ardently; and he died for her sake——"

"Died for her sake? the Count of d' A'Prata, your father? What do you mean, my Rosina?"

"Nothing!" muttered the young woman, turning pale.

Again they started on their silent walk; but their silence was no longer caused by inexpressible happiness; a strange reserve painfully closed their mouths.

At the bottom of the hill, they had to stop; the wall which enclosed the park of Sasseville was before them. On the mossy, crumbling stones, a few wild rose bushes climbed, and September had already turned their leaves to rust. Still, here and there could be seen a faded blossom, as a last smile of summer. The young woman rushed towards one of the bushes, gathered two bunches of these little flowers, and said:

"Pardon me, dear Marcel, for having grieved you just now. Pardon me! And now listen to me—understand me. I know not what destiny, to-morrow, perhaps, has in store for us. I, who have just now wounded in you the noblest of prides—the pride of one's country—I love you! I love you! Whatever happens, I shall

always love you. But you, my friend, should trials come, would you preserve whole the dear treasure of your heart? Take this rose; it is my name-sake; and, like it, my mind is wild. In the hour of temptation, if you ever experience doubt and its pains, look at it; and, when you think you love me no more, it will tell you to love me still."

Smiling, Rosina Savelli slipped one of the bunches in her dress, raised the other to her mouth, breathed its humid odor, then handed it to her lover, who pressed her passionately in his arms.

Suddenly Madame di Carpegna uttered a slight cry, and drew herself away, deeply embarrassed. A servant of the castle was coming down the hill towards them.

"It is a caller, sir," said the man, when he came nearer; "a foreigner who asks to see the Princess."

At the same time he handed a card, which Rosina hastened to take from him. She read it, and changing color, remained for a moment visibly hesitating.

"All right," she said at last, "I follow you."

"Who comes to disturb us?" asked Marcel. "Let me see this card."

But Rosina had already torn it in small pieces.

"A countryman of mine," she answered, "a kinsman. I have to receive him."

"Of course you have. I'll go with you."

"No, no; please don't! Remain behind, I pray you! It is Traventi! You know, Alessandro Traventi, one of the seconds of the Prince in the duel at Vaucresson. I don't suppose you care to see the man again. I will hurry him off." And without waiting for an answer, she rushed towards the castle, crying:

"Be patient for half an hour, my beloved, and go and wait for me on the shore."

Madame di Carpegna ran up the steep hill. When at the top, she turned around, and addressed her lover a caressing gesture. Soon her form was lost among the trees of the park.

Marcel watched her disappearing form; he then opened a gate, and went out in the fields towards the *rendezvous*.

It was getting dark, and the valley was already wrapped in obscurity. On the horizon, the sun was plunging into the sea, coloring brilliantly the clouds suspended over it.

The lover lay down on the shore to enjoy at his ease the end of a beautiful day. An inexpressible joy filled his soul, permeating his whole being with a sensation of perfect happiness.

V

SIMPLE DIALOGUE

WHEN Rosina reached the depths of the wood and felt hidden in the obscurity, she slackened her pace. She walked with difficulty, perspiration running down her face; she stopped, very much agitated.

Nothing could upset her more than the arrival of this Traventi. Traventi! He who in London called himself Marino, the companion of her old husband, the former familiar and trusted friend of the dead! What did that man call upon her for? "*Il tempo stringe*—I am in a hurry," said the card which had been so quickly torn to minute fragments. What meaning could she give to this enigma? Alas! only the worst one.

She looked back again. In the distance, she saw Marcel walking towards the shore. Fortunately, he had not followed her. How happy he looked, the beloved one, walking proudly, feeling light under the weight of his happiness! Beloved, oh! yes; too much so! And involuntarily she started to join him.

"But no; no weakness, Rosina!" Slowly then, she wended her way to the castle. Now

the high brick walls could be seen. Madame di Carpegna walked faster. She might be seen through the opened windows. Well, she was no longer afraid! Afraid? of what, after all? She was a widow; she was free; she was loved; she loved! In the vestibule, the Princess questioned the servant:

"Has the person who sent for me been here for some time?"

"For half an hour, madame. This gentleman seems to be in a great hurry; there is a carriage waiting for him at the entrance of the park."

Ah! a carriage was waiting for the man! The call would be of short duration, then, and she would know how to make it shorter still! Nevertheless, Madame di Carpegna stopped before the door, a hand extended towards the knob, undecided. But the valet was looking at her; she saw the look, she entered.

In the parlor was sitting a man of unprepossessing appearance, poorly dressed, and suspicious looking. He rose quickly, and bowed very obsequiously. "My humble regards to the princess," said he.

At the first glance Mme. di Carpegna had recognized the face with the long beard and uncombed head. Yes, it was the man she had seen in London—the shabby, sinister-looking music teacher, an ill-looking monkey.

He had spoken in Italian, and intentionally she answered him in French. She hoped, this way, to shorten the visit.

"Good morning, Monsieur Marino; I am glad to see you again."

The man bowed anew, and he, too, spoke French, a lisping French, dragging and lengthy like the macaroni from over the Alps.

"Your illustrissime highness has not forgotten, then, the obscure Marino? You change my humility into pride!"

The illustrissime highness could not repress an expression of disgust; the man was so contemptible, so abjectly servile! however, she tried to be pleasant.

"I had expected to have the pleasure of a call from you before, my dear sir."

Marino tried a smile which only showed his gorilla teeth so white in the midst of his black and hairy face.

"This is an unexpected call, but necessary. I come to fetch the most beautiful of princesses."

"To fetch me?"

"I have said, the most beautiful of princesses."

Taken by surprise, the young woman had drawn herself back; the man advanced towards her quickly.

"A carriage is waiting for us," he continued. "Oh, a very modest equipage; unworthy of a

great lady, like you! But I found nothing better in Fecamp. It is a primitive part of the country, this Norman district—their carriages are uncivilized."

Madame di Carpegna felt herself fainting, but she made a tremendous effort to appear indifferent.

"I am not good at guessing riddles, sir; please explain yourself!"

"A riddle? This is no riddle, Ecco! Those in Geneva, as well as our friends in London, told each other. The first act of the comedy of love is ended. Our *diva*, you, Princess, has acted her part finely. Oh, yes! Madame you have been admirable, astonishing, sublime! It's all a prologue, though. We must now begin the next act—the curtain is going to rise on another scene; let us hurry the end. Formidable events are being prepared; formidable, your highness!"

The emphatic talker paused, and straightening up his backbone, which had been all this time pitifully bent:

"So, they have sent me, lucky fellow, to come and take you away! I, Marino, the humble Marino, am raised to the position of your *cavaliere servante!* What an undeserved honor! Now let us be off quickly."

He went for his hat, which he placed on a piece of furniture, and walked towards the door.

Without making a movement to follow him, Rosina was looking at him, very pale.

"I try, in vain, to understand your meaning, sir!" she finally managed to say, more and more troubled.

The Italian came back, and still smiling, still gentle:

"She does not understand! She? Such a wonderful intelligence! Yes, yes; her highness understands! She even begins to remember! I see by the color on her face that with consciousness memory is coming back!"

He leaned towards the scared woman, and in a low voice thrilling with mystery:

"Remember!" he said, "as the French song has it. Yes; remember, my noble lady, remember the Arditti restaurant—the public house for the rich, and Prince di Carpegna—a munificent prince—and the little Bella, the little one with the red skirt and the wild roses, exactly like the one I see now on your dress, Princess. Such a darling when she sang, '*Libiamo ne lieti calici.*' A pretty voice, but needing cultivation. Ah! what fire in her eyes, what passion in her speech! Remember this also, your Highness: 'I am twenty-two years old, and I am beautiful. Will you avenge my father, you? Say, will you? And I am yours body and soul!' Well, we are going to avenge this beloved father, and thus

the daughter belongs to us: body and soul—she is ours!"

Each of those words repeated by that man wounded to the quick the pride of the former street singer. Beside herself with impotent rage, she bent her head before the sarcasm of this terrible man. Still she tried to revolt, and gathering the remnants of her audacity, she laughed in his face:

"Those are old stories, my dear fellow! Bella exists no longer, and the Princess di Carpegna is free! Formerly, a slave of her husband, perhaps; henceforth liberated. Her husband is dead ——."

"Alas! yes!" whined the Italian. "He allowed himself to be shot. Dead, the noble Prince, from the consequence of his wound—dead in Ravenna, in my arms, calling for his wife in those supreme moments. And the wife was away in Paris, devoting herself to her filial duties; and, notwithstanding her ardent desire, unable to attend the sacred funeral. Yes, he is dead, *il generoso vecchione*. Quite dead. 'As dead as a door nail,' as the English say in a very inelegant metaphor. But his spirit is immortal, Madame; like the shadow of Ninus in the opera of the divine Rossini, it is hovering here now, it is looking at us, it hears us, judges us, speaks to us, and it is telling you, Princess: 'Take care!'"

"Ah! threats! I know you all as bandits, without soul or scruples, and capable enough of killing me. I ——."

"Kill her? Well, more extraordinary things than that have been known to happen. But no; calm yourself, Madame. Whatever Rosina may do, we will always spare the daughter of Savelli."

The daughter of Savelli! With what a scornful tone this Marino had uttered these words. And the loving daughter, forgetful of her father, lowered her head under the insult. Her *bravado* forsook her; blushing with anger and shame, she fell heavily on a chair without uttering a word.

Again fear took possession of her, and desperate thoughts filled her mind. She felt she was lost—totally lost. The abject creature, who had been insulting her for the last quarter of an hour, would not certainly go away without carrying away with him his victim. A few moments more and Marcel would be coming: the other would tell him everything, the whole ignominious story. How furious and disgusted this man of honor would be, to have been trifled with in this shameless way! No, Rosina, your smile then would be powerless to calm his just wrath; you could find nothing to say in defense of yourself. With one awful gesture, your lover would drive you out of his

house. Let him, at least, be ignorant of the infamous part you have acted. Absent, you will carry with you his regrets—his persistent illusions shall make him long for you—

This is what she was saying to herself; and notwithstanding it all she stood there dumb and trembling before the vision of her whole adored future crumbling down to ashes.

Through the open windows, the purple of the setting sun seemed to bid her a last good-bye; the sea breeze caressed her gently with its soft breath, and the church bells of Sasseville pealing for the evening prayer, filled her with ineffable melancholy. What! so much calm happiness in this quiet corner of the earth, blessed with such love, and all this be forsaken forever!

In the meanwhile Marino had stretched himself in an armchair, and carelessly smoked a cigarette:

"*Disgraziati noi!*" he said, as if speaking to himself. "With women, all the calculations of human wisdom are indeed superfluous! Here is one whose father was a hero and fell a martyr. The blood of Scipione Savelli cries for vengeance; but his daughter is deaf; she prefers cooing sweetly in this nest of verdure, and with whom, of all sons of men?—with the son of her father's assassin!"

With one bound, Rosina was near him:

"Who placed me in such a position, you coward, you rascal, if not you yourself? Who told me, 'make him love you,' if not your Carpegna, my vile husband?"

"Yes, 'make him love you' were his orders; but he did not tell you 'love him.' You did not well understand his instructions!"

"His instructions? Ruffians! Because you met me one day in need of bread, did you suppose I had no heart? I tell you, this is infamous! 'Make him love you, you beggar; obey us, for we have bought you!' And I, unfortunate one, I fell in love with him! Yes, unfortunate!"

"In short, Rodrigue and Chimène! the tragedy of *Le Cid* repeating itself," chuckled the ex-Professor. "This is a play, not real life!"

"You were threatening me a minute ago," continued Rosina; "kill me, then, as you have killed others! Yes, kill me, for I have such a horror of myself that I cannot stand life any longer. What do they want of me, those people, with their *sublime* projects? The wretches! Oh! yes, indeed, it is your work, this shameful love which tortures me! You have commanded me to trifle with love, and love has trifled with me! It has slowly and implacably devoured me. And, now, I love! do you hear! do you understand? I love, I love!"

"*Basta!* Why so frantic?"

"Why? Ah! yes, why? Does one ever know the reason of such things? A fatality, a charm, an ill-wind; my destiny, no doubt. Why? Indeed, they make me laugh with their *why!* Because love is an unavoidable contagion; because, being degraded on account of love, I would be still more abject if I did not love, because my husband had reviled me, while my lover has raised me to his heart—because—because I love, that's all."

She fell back in her chair, worn out with excitement, hiding her face within her hands. Suddenly, she shuddered.

Marino had risen and was looking at one of the pictures on the wall. It was a portrait of Count Brutus Besnard. The former judge was represented in his court costume—the scarlet gown bordered with ermine; he was standing in the attitude of a public prosecutor. The Mazzinian looked for some time at those detested features; then in an ironical, impertinent tone he said:

"And has Monsieur Brutus, the 'White Butcher,' a part of your love?"

The young woman raised her head, and with her wild eyes, looked the image of insanity; but with a quick movement Marino rushed towards her, and took hold of her. Roughly, he obliged her to rise, and, twisting her wrists,

PASTARELLA

dragged her in front of the portrait. She fought hard, but he did not let go his hold.

"Look!" he said, "look, I say, unworthy daughter! He was dressed like this, that man, when they dragged to his chamber your father, still bleeding from his wounds! He had this very attitude when he demanded your father's death, when death already had refused to take him! He was smiling that same lofty smile, when it was granted him that your father should be shot, and this time the bullets ended the martyr's tortures! Look! look! I tell you, you affectionate creature! Or, rather, here! here! caress those precious hands, kiss those long white fingers, and that red gown, too, still wet, perhaps, with the splashings of Savelli's blood! You parricide! you she-wolf!"

And all this time he held within his claws the neck of the bewildered woman, and forced her to place her lips on the canvas.

She fought furiously, tearing with her nails the pitiless torturer who was using such abominable violence upon her. The low-born Italian woman showed her nature.

"Villain! Villain! Yes, you speak the truth, this love is ignominious! I am a vile creature, a parricide! Wretches! do what you please with me, since I sold myself, since you have bought me, you fiends! since I belong to you, entirely, irredeemably—you, take me

away, take me away; but be quick. Oh, quick! before he comes back—he! for if I see him again, I would no longer go—I could no longer go. I would fall dead at his feet!"

The grimy fingers released their grasp, and Marino let his victim go.

"*Va bene!*" he said, "at last I recognize my Princess! Now, on the way! they are waiting for us in Paris; your Highness will soon know what a glorious mission is in store for her."

He picked up the lace mantilla Madame di Carpegna had dropped, and when he came back to her he found the poor woman in tears:

"Cry not, dear signora; you break my heart! do not cry so! You will see him again, your *giovinotto*, and that before long, I assure you."

"Never! Never!" sobbed Rosina.

"Yes! Yes! You shall see him again, this beloved gallant; I assure you, you shall."

She drew back, disgusted, and staring at the bold fellow with unutterable contempt.

"Never! Do you hear! To serve your infamous purposes, pray look for some one else; but do not touch my lover! Oh! no, not him! I will not see him again, never, never!"

"Pshaw!" the man said smiling; "lovers' and drunkards' promises avail nothing. Besides, here is your ticket of leave in due form."

He drew out of his pocket a letter prepared

in advance, and laid it, well in sight, on the parlor table.

"*Presto e vivace!*" cried he; "trains do not wait; honor still less!"

He offered his arm to the desolate woman, who repulsed him scornfully.

Pale, as if in agony, she was going to pass the threshold of the room, when her eyes fell upon the bunch of flowers fastened on her dress. With a desperate gesture she tore it off, carried it to her lips, kissed it fondly, then ran back to place it near the letter in token of an eternal good-bye.

Marino had watched every one of her movements:

"*Caspisco!*" he said, feigning emotion, "wild rose, sign of love; the emblem of our friend here; the dear and sweet remembrance whose perfumes are breathed by the light of the stars! Happy young man!"

Without answering a word, with her eyes dry now, and appearing to be shaking away from her the dust of her past love, Rosina Savelli rushed out. A few minutes more and the carriage was taking her towards the unknown.

When, half an hour later, Marcel came in, the parlor was dark and deserted. They brought in the lights; and, on the table, he noticed a closed letter addressed to him. Be-

side himself with sudden anxiety, he tore the envelope and uttered a cry of surprise.

There were only two lines:

"She thought she loved you: she loved you not. Forget her then; for one may forget."

No signature.

Marcel Besnard read again and again this rough good-bye; he did not understand, he did not wish to understand. Finally he called a servant:

"Where is the Princess?"

"Her Ladyship has just departed."

"Alone?"

"No, sir, with the gentleman who had been waiting for her."

"Did she say where she was going?'

None of the servants could tell.

"No matter! tell them to bring the carriage round as quick as possible! I shall overtake her!"

When alone, Marcel picked up again the anonymous note. Then his eyes fell upon the bunch of wild roses, which seemed now as withered as his despised love itself. The forlorn man gave way to an angry laugh; he took the poor little flowers and crushed them between his fingers, threw the pieces on the floor and trampled upon them.

"There! there!" he cried, mad with rage; "so will I do with your remembrance! Ah! how happy I am to be free—at last!"

But, just then, his eyesight failed him, his knees gave away, and he fell heavily to the floor, in a swoon.

VI

BECAUSE HE IS MY SON

THE winter had come, covering Paris with a mantle of fog and melancholy.

On that night it was raining.

In the family mansion of the Avenue de Breteuil, Marie-Anne was yet sitting close to her father, although it was already late in the evening.

How old Count Besnard looked! A single year had bent his form, once so straight and so proud; his white hair had become thinner; his face showed purple spots, and, round the corners of his mouth coursed two deep wrinkles; the signs of decrepitude. His disease had become chronic; the swoons more frequent, and the doctor no longer hid his fears.

"Be sure," he would say, "to spare him any violent emotion; I fear a catastrophe."

The little deformed daughter had settled down as his nurse, vigilantly watching the patient, lavishing her filial attentions.

At that moment, the old man was stretched upon a reclining chair, his eyes closed and his hands joined together. He seemed to slumber; but judging from his deathly pallor and his per-

fectly motionless form, one might have thought it the sleep of death. She was also very much changed, the poor Marie-Anne; her thin face had grown still more so, two deep furrows in her white cheeks bore witness to the long sleepless nights, as well as to the tearful days. Her attire had no longer any sign of her former coquetry; no ribbon in her hair, no flowers on her bosom; her black woolen dress seemed to betoken the recent loss of some loved one. Sitting at the piano, the young girl was playing the weird modulations and the heart-rending chords of Chopin. She had chosen those of his works which her father preferred, nocturnes or berceuses; and in the dim light of the chamber resounded now the groans uttered by the divine artist, now his cries of desperate joy, vibrating like a blasphemy. Oh! Chopin! poet of grief, whose genius was entirely made of tears, patriot crying over his country, lover despising his love—what suffering soul could ever listen, without a shudder, to the pathetic accents which you uttered over your dead heart?

Two gentle taps on the door startled the performer. She stopped short. The door opened a little, and the affrighted face of Philomène appeared.

"Mademoiselle," she whispered.

"What do you wish?"

"Mademoiselle! A caller."

"At this hour?"

Marie-Anne began to tremble; a sudden emotion took away her speech.

"A caller," repeated the servant; "you *must* come down."

Count Besnard opened his eyes:

"Go, my child; and come back to tell me what is all this mystery."

So Marie-Anne went down, and the patient fell back into his reverie just interrupted. However, he was listening, and he heard.

There was an unusual commotion in the house; he heard voices—the voice of his daughter—another, too! There were steps on the stairs, steps in the hall; timidly the door was pushed open. Marcel stood in front of him.

Count Besnard did not move:

"Is that you, sir?" he asked, with undisturbed indifference. "So you are back, are you?"

Humbly, and keeping at a distance, the young man bent his knee:

"Father, grant me your pardon! I have suffered so much!"

No response; he went on:

"Grant me your pardon, sir; I know I have shamefully offended you; I know I have tried to force you to give your consent to an un-

worthy marriage ; for me to give your name to a degraded creature ; to open to her your house, your family ! But I have cruelly suffered, sir ; I have expiated ! Pardon me ! "

" Father ! Oh, father ! " murmured as an echo Marie-Anne's suppliant voice.

Count Besnard weakly raised his head :

"And how long was it since you left your Castle of Sasseville ? "

Marcel thought a minute ; then in words interrupted by moments of silence, he said :

" I know—I understand—I ought to have rushed here and thrown myself at your feet long before this, but I dared not. No ; I am lying ! I was not willing. My folly had not left me entirely. *She*—that woman—had fled from me ; I *have* attempted to rejoin her. She had run away ; I pursued her. I crossed the whole of France. I went all over Italy ; I searched every city. In vain ! I discovered nothing ! And now my love is dead ; my insanity is cured ! Father, grant me your pardon ; I have suffered so much ! "

With a childish impulse, indescribably pathetic, the little deformed creature had also fallen on her knees.

" Father ! Oh, father ! " she said, unable to find any other word of supplication.

" If I dare to present myself before you," continued Marcel, " it is because I have to bid

you good-bye. I cannot remain in Paris, with your wrath on me! My life is shattered; I must regenerate my soul! I am going away, I care not where; but let it be far away! I have applied for a consulate in some far-off country, where I shall have duties to perform, so as to regain my self-respect. Do I dare ask you to indorse my request?"

"I will do so, sir. I shall speak to the minister."

Marcel got slowly up, and followed by Marie-Anne, went out of the room hesitatingly.

Still stretched in his armchair, Brutus Besnard was listening to his retreating steps. They were slow—very slow; they were going down the stairs, uncertain. They did not stop on the first landing. They already resounded on the tiles of the vestibule going towards the street door—towards a separation, perhaps forever.

Suddenly the old man stood up, ran to the door of his chamber, opened it, and cried out, passionately:

"Marcel!"

The steps stopped.

"Marcel! Marcel!"

The son was hurrying to the call. The father's arms were outstretched, he ran into them overjoyed; their silent embrace lasted a long time.

VII

PHANTOM OF THE NIGHT

"BECAUSE this one, my son, was dead, and is born again, he was lost and is found again."

Now in the room of the found-again child a bright fire was burning in the fireplace, and the lamp spread its soft light tempered by the shade. Marcel kissed Marie-Anne on the forehead, and said, gently:

"Go, darling; I feel very tired; I want to try and sleep."

At last he was alone!

What a delight to be free—to rest the body and compose the mind. How pleasant to look at his tastefully decorated bachelor quarters. Everything was in its place and in perfect order—even the papers on the writing desk, which had been left undisturbed—dear little sister! He got up and slowly went the round of the room. Everywhere familiar objects seemed to welcome him. First, a brilliant panoply arranged by himself with artistic care; there were breastplates, shields, helmets, throatpieces engraved in the "Renaissance" style; other arms more modern: muskets,

swords, pistols. Ah! here were those, which at Vaucresson. . . . Violently he snatched them off and threw them in the bottom of a cupboard. Now he looked at the water colors which adorned the walls, the simple and at times talented, work of his gentle sister, Marie-Anne; they were remembrances of those country excursions they had made together. Here was Auray and the lonely heather of the "Champs-des-Martyrs;" Audierne with its blue bay, its red granite, its dark evergreens, and its Breton girls whose gaiety is so melancholy.

Oh! what a happy time, Marcel, when you could listen to their ditties, and have no other thought but that they were beautiful! Here was a familiar Normandy landscape: the park of Sasseville, a view of the valley of the Dalles, the avenue of high trees, that very place where . . . he closed his eyes and turned the picture towards the wall. Why did all those hated remembrances seem to pursue him, when he was trying to flee from them? No, it would be better to get absorbed in a book, and Marcel walked towards his library. There they were, all his favorite poets, the gentle comforters for wounded hearts: here was the master of them all, Chateaubriand, the first explorer of the abysses of the human heart, the incomparable artist who has done so much for French

literature. There were others, too: those shining minds, Victor Hugo and de Vigny; Musset, whose accents but increase one's sufferings; Lamartine, who knows how to soothe them; and there were also more recent reputations: Banville, who, at times, knows how to incrust a tear like a well-set precious stone, and this Leconte de Lisle, the superb, the rival of the greatest. Towards those Marcel stretched out his hand, and it met a foreigner's work, an Italian's; the stern Florentine himself. Dante's book flew open as of its own accord:

> Love quickly attracted by noble hearts,
> Love, who never allows the loved one not to love,
> Love who leads to the same death.

Marcel closed the book.

Yes, yes, he knew them too well, those fatal lines! How many times had he read them—read them with "her!" her, that woman! and he began to walk the floor restlessly.

That woman! certainly not, he was not thinking of her! An effaced image—a vanishing phantom—ashes entirely cold! "She!" and a derisive laugh broke the silence of the room.

He was now overcome by fatigue; and having gone to bed, he put out the light. At last he was going to indulge in sleep. Heavily went his head on his pillow: he was asleep, but he awoke almost at once, sat up in bed and

looked around; a sharp pain went through him, it was "that woman!"—the effaced image, the vanishing phantom — the ashes entirely cold!

"She!" still "She!"

It had grown very dark, and outside the cold December wind was blowing. Marcel laughed again, as persistently thought of *her* who haunted him in the hours of night as well as under the sun's radiance.

"You!" he finally cried out. "I will find you again; and then, then—didn't you tell me yourself: 'When your beloved deceives you, kill her!'"

VIII

POSSESSION

DECEMBER passed on, snowy and icy; but noisy with the festivities of that imperial epoch so greedy of enjoyment.

The year 1858 opened with the sounds of music and the rhythm of polkas and quadrilles; an endless feast among the government officials; an overflow of official happiness. Balls at the Tuileries, balls at the many palaces, balls everywhere. Every night arose from the feverish city an atmosphere of pleasure, the perfumed dresses whirling in the waltz, and the constant whispering, flattering and giggling going on behind fans. Not for a century, had the French officials feasted in their uniforms so much, danced so much, supped so much, made love so much.

Yes, hurrah! for joy; life is so short, and empires so unstable.

But while the worldly and elegant Paris kept thus intoxicated by its own gayety, in the mansion of the Avenue Breteuil, the life of each of its occupants continued on, severe and monotonous.

Days succeeded days, the morrow resembled the day just ended.

A complete transformation had now taken place in Marcel Besnard's disposition. The fashionable young man, the elegant beau, had disappeared, and in his stead stood a morose, taciturn individual. No more fine suppers, no more theater parties, no more gambling.

What was he doing with himself, this Viscount Besnard, this fine dancer, this leader of cotillons, who was sought after by all the mothers of marriageable daughters? Growing, day after day, more unsociable, he was, little by little, losing the habits of society; he refused all invitations, neglected all the duties of politeness. He had even given up going to the "first Monday of the Empress," a great breach of court etiquette, indeed. His father becoming uneasy about him, occasionally addressed him some gentle reprimand; but a shrug of the shoulders was the only answer Marcel would give him. On the other hand, the young man worked hard. Thanks to his father's influence, the State Council had excused his long absence, and after a long sermon from the eloquent M. Baroche, Viscount Besnard had been reinstated in his functions; and had, strangely enough, turned out a zealous and hard worker.

Every morning, at about eleven o'clock, he

might be seen, waiting for the opening of the session, and walking about in that big, solemn hall, whose panels were decorated with pictures representing the virtues of former judges and lawyers. There, from the high seats which the State Councilors occupied, Marcel could admire the lawyers working themselves up to a high pitch of well-paid indignation. Often there were quarrels in this Sanctuary of Thémis.

There was a Monsieur Marchand especially, a fiery little man, rolling his big eyes behind big glasses; then the quiet Monsieur Boulatignier, with solemn gestures, and speech like that of an oracle—an ultra-conservative gentleman, despising everything new.

Marcel's humbler position did not allow him to take part in their discussions, but he reported them all very faithfully. The President of his Section, Monsieur Boudet, soon learned to appreciate his qualities, and predicted a fine future for him, a superb destiny. "Ah! yes," he would say, "this young Besnard will succeed."

In the meanwhile, Marcel went nowhere, except on the most extraordinary errands. At nightfall, when the sittings of the State Council were over, Marcel would go out, last and alone, always alone. Then began the most outlandish promenade.

Going along the quays of the Seine, he would

disappear in the most forlorn parts of Grenelle. January's keen wind would cut his face, the snow would cover him; he felt nothing, he saw nothing, but kept walking faster and faster. At times, he would lean over the parapet of the river, and then, how the unfortunate man would watch the pieces of ice rushing towards the abyss!

Once at the bridge of Jéna, he would cross the river and plunge into the darkness of the Trocadéro quarter. That part of Paris at that time had an unsavory reputation; it was nothing but an accumulation of shapeless rocks, big weeds and piles of brush. At that place, this strange pedestrian would stop, sit down, tired out, on a rough bench, and, like an insane man after a fit, remain in a stupor.

Then his eyes would turn towards Passy and watch this suburb getting lighted little by little. Suddenly he would rise, almost run, and get home, out of breath. And his father, in seeing him come back, would shake his head sorrowfully; and Marie-Anne would wipe a tear. But he noticed nothing, and, at the family meal, would either be silent or nervously vivacious.

One evening, however, he crossed the Trocadéro, and followed the Seine to the first cottages of Auteuil. Then, plowing his way through those deserted parts, he began ascending the

hill of Boulainvilliers, and, at about a third of the ascent, he turned to the right. In front of him was a mysterious alley with villas on both sides; the street *des Jardins*—a small street winding among trees and fences.

Almost at the entrance of this mysterious alley was a pavilion in the Louis XVI style, a pretty little retreat. Marcel now stood still, looking. It was here that, during the last spring, she had hidden herself. "She," "the other one," here that they had exchanged their first vows!

The house seemed deserted—dead, like their poor love. Its doors and shutters were closed; no noise, no light. Solitude weighed heavy on the "hermitage;" and the snow, melting down from its roof, drop by drop, gave it the appearance of shedding tears. And Marcel looked on, all in a perspiration, this cold night. Ah! how well he knew it, this unlucky dwelling, every corner of it! Over there was the wall covered with ivy, which, one evening, he dared to climb over—the *first* evening! Behind the wall was a large lawn bordered with lilac bushes. What intoxicating odors came forth out of that garden that night in May in the perfumed spring! How he shuddered, going with stealthy steps over those lawns covered with daisies! On the ground floor, the high window was open. A lamp lighted the room discreetly, and Rosina

was there lazily lounging—so beautiful in her mourning dress, with a book in her lap, and a far-away expression in her eyes, as if lost in a dream. He entered. She uttered a little cry of surprise and rose, quite pale. "You! you!" And during three months, they had tasted a perfect happiness in perfect mystery. At nightfall she used to open the window, and every night he would carefully glide in. And now—now, oh, wretch! thief of love! murderer of hearts! shameless one!

With one bound, Marcel rushed towards the house; knocked with all his might. The sinister noise resounded afar, and an echo repeated it; but nobody moved in this closed house. Again! and again! Nobody! She must, then, have left Paris, this hated woman. Gone, escaped forever! "Ah! what a coward I am!" murmured the wretched man, and he raised his fist with a threatening gesture.

Yes, indeed, he was a coward, this insane victim of love, for he had already knocked twenty times at the door of this deserted house; and, notwithstanding his repeated disappointments, the next night he was there again.

On that day, however, the house seemed to be inhabited: the blinds were opened; lights could be seen through all the windows.

Who, then, was hiding behind those walls?

As he had done the day before, Marcel hurried to the front door and knocked. He waited quite a while when at last a little window in the panel was opened ; and a rough voice asked :

" What do you wish ? "

A name, that of the Princess di Carpegna was on his lips ; but he refrained uttering it, not daring to, and in a timid voice asked :

" Who lives in this house ? "

" Monsieur le Baron de La Chesnaye," replied the voice ; and the window was abruptly closed.

And there before this closed door, Marcel stood stupefied. " La Chesnaye ! He had bought the cottage, then ? But, he must have seen Rosina, talked to her, transacted business with her ! Ah ! If one could only ask a few questions."

And Marcel knocked again.

This time, nobody deigned to answer. At the end of the alley, he could see some shadows sliding by, some silhouettes of men, probably attracted by the noise : the street " des Jardins " was not deserted as it had been the day before.

Seven o'clock was striking at the church of Auteuil. The vibrations of the big clock suddenly brought Marcel Besnard to his senses. What about his father and the gentle Marie-Anne who were waiting for him ? He started on a run towards Paris.

IX

Monsieur Lazare's Message

A COLD mist was beginning to fall when at last Marcel arrived at the Avenue de Breteuil. This cold night and in such a lonely quarter as that of the Champs de Mars, he had not been able to find a carriage; and he arrived very much behind time.

The avenue at this late hour was almost deserted, poorly lighted by a few lamps; each passer-by was hurrying to reach his dwelling, and they all looked like ghosts disappearing in the fog.

In front of Count Besnard's mansion, however, a man was sitting apparently asleep; he was on a bench, with bent head and back covered with frost; some homeless tramp probably. Still running, Marcel passed him and was going to ring the bell when he heard himself called:

"Monsieur le Vicomte."

The sleeper had risen and was coming forward.

"Monsieur le Vicomte Besnard?"

"I am he."

"I knew you were absent, sir, so I was watching for you."

Marcel looked at the individual so well informed: a big fellow about forty years old, with black beard, and uncombed hair. He wore the uniform of the Parisian Messenger—the blue corduroy jacket and seal cap.

"What do you wish of me, my good man?"

"Sir, I bring you a small memento."

"A memento?" said Marcel, surprised at these strange words.

"Yes; a message from Monsieur Lazare."

"I do not know Monsieur Lazare."

"No; but he knows you well."

Marcel kept looking at the man. Where had he already seen this face? His memory recalled no name; still he was sure he had met somewhere this thick beard and untidy head. But where? On what public street? at the door of what night restaurant? A foreigner, surely—his accent left no doubt—some Corsican, or an Italian, perhaps. All sorts of wild ideas were rushing through his head; and a strong emotion was taking possession of him.

"Let us go in," he said.

The other stopped him.

"It is useless to go in, sir; you would only come right out again."

And he added, presenting a box tied with a string:

"Take this! it brings peace to the heart!"

This romantic sentence was uttered in such a

singular tone that Marcel shuddered. The peace of the heart! Who could be this sentimental individual who divined his anguish so accurately? Very much puzzled, Marcel extended his hand:

"I have no taste for bad jokes, my man, and my cane is ready for practical jokers—Now give this to me."

He took the box, stepped near a lamp-post and broke the string.

First, he found a wrapping of cloth; this being torn off, there lay a wooden casket carefully sealed. The seals flew to pieces, Marcel opened it, and suddenly uttered an exclamation of anxious surprise—at the bottom of the box reposed a bunch of faded wild roses.

With his face bent over the yellowish petals, Marcel tried to understand. The rose from the bushes! The wild rose! "Her" favorite flower, "that woman's" favorite flower! "The emblem," she had said, "of her name!" A pretense for big, tragic words!

And the lover recalled the past; he could see in the distance the Castle of Sasseville, the shade of its big trees, the high wall covered with vines, the bush of wild roses, and, among the rust-colored leaves and thorns, a single bunch of blossoms, the last of the fall season. And, there still, he could see the form of his beloved, lithe and graceful, with the evening

purple as a background ; she was going towards the bush, and gathering the chilled flowers, was presenting them to her lover after having kissed them fondly. "Take these flowers, Marcel ; your Rosina bears the same name, and like them, her spirit is wild. In the hours of discouragement, poor friend, if ever you are visited by grief, look at them, and, when you think you love me no more, they will tell you to love still ——." O ! souvenirs of broken vows ! burning lies ! pitiless torments ! remembrances of happiness forever gone !

He felt an indescribably cruel pang ; the vision vanished.

"Who sends me this ?" said he in a faltering voice.

"I told you already ; Monsieur Lazare."

"Where does your Monsieur Lazare live ?"

"I came to take you to him."

"What does he want of me ?"

"He will tell you himself."

Marcel hesitated a minute.

"No, not this evening. Come back tomorrow."

The enigmatic personage shook his head, and became very solemn.

"Tomorrow will be too late ! Monsieur Lazare is dying, and a terrible secret weighs heavily on his conscience."

"Ah ! I begin to understand."

"No, you are mistaken; you do not understand. Come, let us hurry."

The son of Count Besnard still hesitating, the man leaned forward:

"They wish to talk to you about 'her.'"

"Her?" This time his insane love got the best of his reason. Marcel turned towards the mysterious messenger and cried wildly: "Let us go, then! I follow you."

They hurried away.

On the Esplanade, an empty carriage was passing; they entered it.

"To Montmartre," said the foreigner, "Place St. Pierre, at the entrance of the street de l'Eglise."

X

MONSIEUR LAZARE

IT was a mean looking alley where they finally stopped, very steep, bordered by unoccupied and sandy land. The lower part of it was buried in the fog, while the top reached to the old church of Montmartre. In that inhospitable street, there was no house, except an old, dilapidated five-story rookery, where the light of a few candles was the only sign of life.

"*Ecco!*" said Marcel's guide, "we have arrived. You ask for Signora Giulia Negri's room. That is where Monsieur Lazare lives. As for me, I leave you; my mission is ended."

And the man went down the street leaving his companion to his fate.

Without hesitation Marcel entered the den. First, a narrow, damp, bad smelling hall; then, at the end of it, under the stairs, the janitor's lodging.

"Where is the room of Madame Giulia Negri?"

In the janitor's den a wretched tailor was mending old clothes. At the name of Negri, he quickly left his work and advanced towards the visitor.

"You come, no doubt, for the citizen who is living up there," he said. "No use of your getting out of breath. He must be dead by this time. Anyway, it's on the fifth floor, through the left hall, third door to the right."

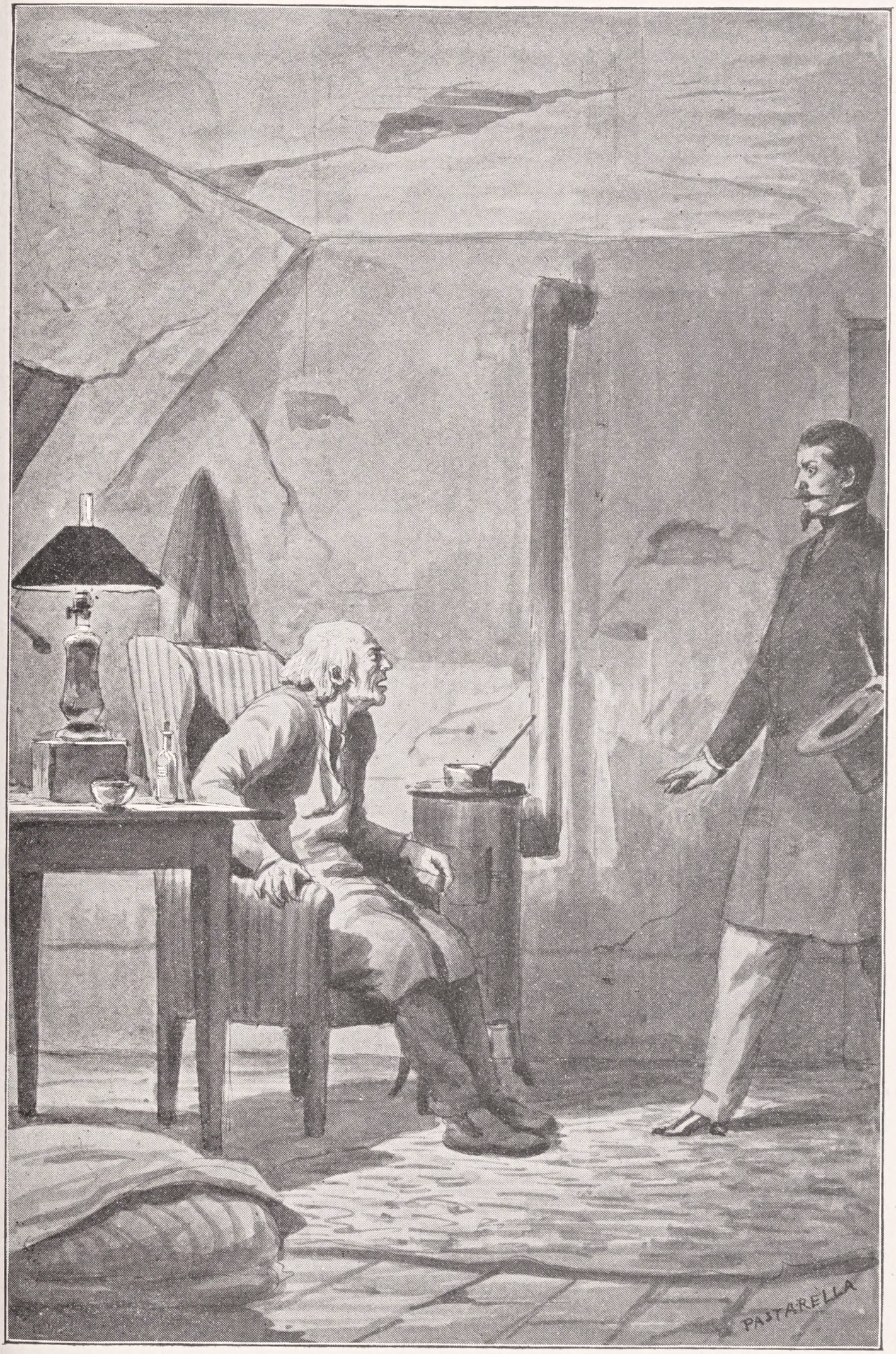
Thereupon, the mender of rags went back to his work.

Marcel Besnard began ascending the dirty stairs, a shaky spiral, getting narrower as it went up. A smoky lamp lighted the first flight; but as soon as the second was reached, he met with complete darkness. Soon, he had to stop, his steps became heavy, his thoughts still more so.

What was he going to that Monsieur Lazare for? To ask him for an explanation of this mystery? What folly! Well so it was, a folly! but he must know and he would know! Who had sent those flowers recalling so many passionate remembrances? What was the meaning of this bunch of wild roses? They seemed to express a regret—a remorse—a desire to see him again! To see her again! Ah! ah! wretch, indeed, we will see!

He continued to ascend.

On the fifth landing, complete darkness. Marcel felt the wall to guide himself, but found no sign of any opening. With his fist he knocked against the wall, and finally called out.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A door was thrown open, and an old woman holding a light looked down the hall. La Giulia Negri, assuredly, this old woman wearing the costume of an Italian artist's model, with her scarlet skirt, velvet waist and unbleached chemisette.

"Whom do you wish to see, sir?" she asked in a querulous voice.

"La Signora Negri."

"I am she."

"Can I see Monsieur Lazare?"

The woman clasped her hands.

"See him? Alas! Soon God alone will see him!"

She stopped short.

"He is calling, I think. Wait here. I will come back right away."

She closed the door, leaving the inquirer in profound darkness.

A vague terror, mixed with growing shame, was gradually taking possession of him. What! was he going to be present at this agony? How humiliating! You had better run away, hurrying as fast as you can, you ridiculous fool! Do you not see they are making a plaything of you? Do you not understand it is some snare you have fallen into? Come, hurry away! now is your last chance!

But Marcel stayed. Might not this dying man possess a secret on which his life and peace de-

pended? And in the dark he waited and listened.

At last the old woman reappeared and signalled him to come.

"Walk in, sir; the *padrone* wishes to see you. *Ma, oh ma, il povero!*"

And words, gesture, expression of face, all the Italian mimic said clearly, that Monsieur Lazare was at the worst. She discreetly made way for the visitor. Marcel entered.

The room into which Marcel was ushered smelt of the odor of bad food, and was low-ceilinged and poverty stricken. The plastering was cracked in many places and allowed the rafters to be seen; when it stormed, rain or snow must have poured through. Everything spoke of privation: the torn and spotted paper on the walls, the narrow window where rags took the place of panes, the dirty straw bed on the floor—certainly this dwelling was often without bread. However, on the tiled floor lay a moquette rug whose faded colors must have seen better days—strange luxury in this needy lodging! perhaps a courteous attention from the landlady to this Monsieur Lazare, the mysterious *padrone*. There was also a brand-new walnut bedstead with a fresh counterpane; the bed of the sick man, surely; as to the woman, she was satisfied with the dirty litter in the corner.

This den was at that moment partly in the dark, having no other light than a lamp with its shade on. Near the stove a man dozed in an armchair—an old, decrepit man, all drawn up, and almost shapeless. His breathing was painful, short and wheezing. In the silence of the place, it sounded like the death rattle.

At the creaking of the door, the invalid seemed to awaken ; he sat up, and in a strangely weak voice, said :

" Come near, Monsieur le Vicomte, my fine friend ; come near me. You are welcome ! "

Marcel went straight up to him and cried :

" You ? "

He had recognized the Prince di Carpegna.

A chuckle shook the body of the patient :

" Yes," he said, " 'tis I ! Funny occurrence, is it not ? Lazarus of old woke up at the Master's command, and the Prince di Carpegna comes forth to-day from the sepulcher you sent him to ! Be seated, dear sir ; we must have a talk together. Well, you are staring at me with just the scared look Don Giovanni had before the statue of the Commandatore ! "

A fit of coughing, followed by half-suffocation, stopped short his lugubrious joke. He reached out his hand towards a bottle of medicine placed near him, and swallowed a few mouthfuls.

" The health of the dying, a Milanese receipt,

the wonderful discovery of the celebrated Verga. Will you taste it?"

And he chuckled again in silence.

"You will excuse, I hope, Monsieur le Vicomte, this wretchedly poor dwelling. The worthy woman who is willing to give me a shelter is a courageous creature, a countrywoman of mine, and devoted to our unfortunate Italy. Yes, my good Giulia, we scatter our bones in exile, but the winds shall carry back our ashes to our country, where our sons shall inhale them, and the holy hatred of the father live again in his progeny! But pardon me, Monsieur le Vicomte, this absurd digression. Alas! we suffer so—Where did I stop? No, the Prince di Carpegna cannot receive you to-day in a palace; he is in hiding, or rather he is dead; however, Monsieur Lazare is very happy to see you."

He paused; then painfully drawing nearer, and leaning towards Marcel Besnard, said:

"Our beautiful Rosina is in Paris. Do you wish to see her again?"

Marcel could not repress a sudden thrill of disgust; but he answered nothing.

"O! I know the words you refuse to utter," the old man went on. "I can read your inmost thoughts. You think: this Prince di Carpegna, what a rascal he is, how infamous! You are mistaken, sir; my honor, as I understand it, is

well worth yours; and as to my moral character, no matter what your French shopkeepers would think of that! Besides, I would not have disturbed you yet; I even would have waited willingly a while longer. But death, with which I have trifled, will not let me delay any longer. It has taken hold of me, it is choking me; it is the consequence of a certain wound of which you may have heard before—in fact it was your work, sir, and a fine marksman's work it was indeed! So, before dying, I wish to make you happy—you, of all men! Now listen: our amiable Rosina is in Paris; say, do you wish to see her again?"

Another fit of coughing overcame him, and again he felt for the Milanese medicine, the discovery of the illustrious Verga. Bewildered by such cynicism, Marcel listened without answering. At last he was going to know!

A few minutes passed thus, and the spell was once more quieted. With a familiar gesture, Monsieur Lazare tried to take the hand of the young man; but the latter drew back scornfully.

"What a charming woman, is our beautiful Rosina," reiterated the Prince di Carpegna, "a goddess with Venus' eyes and Juno's hair! Sparkling, brilliant, writing prose like a Sévigné, and poetry better than a Deshoulières; in a word—perfectly charming! Yes, but very

poor, without a franc to her name. Who, then, is, just now, paying for all her luxury and adorning her with more jewels than the Madonna of Loretto? O! I am not jealous, I assure you! Could it be you, I wonder, dear sir? Please do not twist your glove so! An act of violence towards a dying man would be cowardly, and you are not a coward—at least I never took you for one. Tell me, who then pays for your Rosina's wants and whims?"

And each word, pronounced very low, was interrupted by coughing, suffocation, long silence and sinister chuckling; it was horrible.

In spite of the Milanese panacea, the patient was failing rapidly; his speech was not so distinct, his breathing harder; before long, certainly, a last fit would stamp forever his insolent smile on his lips and overcome this desperate fighter against the agony of death.

With a supreme effort, he gathered all his strength as if to risk a last assault.

"I," he said, "for the last year, have been dead to the world! The ignominy of my widow cannot reach me in that tomb where they all think I am gone; my honor as a husband is safe! But you, sir, who have publicly lived with her—you who declared your open intentions of marrying her—you whom her desertion drove to despair, what do you expect to do?"

Marcel rose, trembling.

"Enough! I refuse to understand you!"

By a supreme effort, the old man sat up, and, this time, took hold of the Assessor's arm.

"Ah! you refuse to understand me! But don't you understand anything, then, O, you stupid fool! Don't you know what abominable ridicule is attached to your name to-day! Ah! Ah! You poor silly fellow, while you were going all over Europe looking for that woman, she was quietly living in Paris with another, a new lover—this one, a beloved one——"

"The name of that man? Wretch! Wretch! Yes, you truly belong to your country of traitors; not daring to strike yourself, you make others strike!"

Without heeding this insult, the Prince continued:

"To-night! do you hear? They are together! do you understand? at Passy!—in the house you know so well! You had better go; you had better run, sir! But be sure to go there well armed!"

With his fingers, with his nails, he was holding on to the hand which had used him so roughly, and, half choking, allowed himself to be dragged about the room:

"Armed! Kill, or they'll kill you! Passy!

The house! Street! down stairs, she—and—and——"

Suddenly he let go, uttered a cry, and fell to the floor.

Hearing the fall, La Negri, who had been watching outside, hurried in.

"Dead!" she cried, "he is dead, the noble prince, the holy martyr for his country!"

She groaned and lamented, and leaning over, spoke to the prostrate body in accents of despair.

"Why did you die before seeing your country free again? Why did you not wait for the day which is coming, the approaching dawn of liberty?"

With the assistance of Marcel, the Italian woman managed to lift the Prince di Carpegna upon the rug. Then she lit a candle, placed it, as a church taper, near the convulsed face, and knelt down. Dumb and speechless at this horrible sight, Marcel dared neither move nor speak. He was watching for a return of life, and, hoping for a last revelation, he listened attentively. The woman had taken a prayer book, and while kneeling, recited the litanies to the Virgin: "*Virgo clemens, Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis!*" Prince di Carpegna was still breathing, but remained unconscious, the death-rattle in his throat growing weaker and weaker. Time was flying; outside, the clock of the

Church of Montmartre was striking eleven. And still from this chamber of horror and death, the supplicating litanies were ascending towards the Mother of Mercy: "Gate of Heaven, Refuge of Sinners, pray for us!"

Strange to say, now, at each supplication, the prostrate body moved, the hands twitched as if in anger. Suddenly, La Negri interrupted her prayers. Had she understood? She leaned over the dying man, and like a nurse watching a sleeping child, she raised his head and began to sing.

She was sadly singing a popular Italian song, the song of Venetian gayeties, when Venice was gay. "Mamma, mamma! Love me, love me!" Suddenly the dying man moved his head, opened his eyes, and moved his lips.

"*Dio!*" he stammered, "*Dio mio, tu patria!*" Then his head fell back, then a great sigh, then — nothing. He was now, indeed, frightful to look at; his open mouth seemed to be still laughing, and his large, staring eyes, full of hatred, seemed to be still threatening.

No, death had been unwilling to wait; it had impatiently cut short the revelation. No denouncing words could henceforth come out of those pale lips. Lazarus had died carrying away with him to the tomb half of his secret.

Terrified and enraged, Marcel Besnard rushed out of this chamber and its dreadful silence.

XI

THE STREET DES JARDINS

NOW he was walking away slowly, and slowly also, by his side, walked the Prince di Carpegna. When he reached the outside Boulevard he sank on a bench, and there also sat the persistent ghost, the dying denunciator, with his pale face and insolent laugh. Marcel could hear the grinding of the death rattle, the fall of the body, and those last words interrupted by the agony: "To-night—together—in the house! She!"

The house? this mansion of the Street des Jardins which had been thrown open to him! Now this despicable La Chesnaye was her nightly guest, no doubt! She! Oh! how vile!

At times though, reason seemed to enlighten this tormented soul plunged in darkness.

"Why should he hide himself so, this old Carpegna? Why this change of name, and, for a whole year, this comedy of death? Yes, why?"

No matter! passion would answer at once; this is another mystery to unravel, but later —to-morrow! She—her—to-night!

He rose, and continued his walk.

Soon he reached the Faubourg Montmartre and the Street Le Peletier.

Though it was after midnight, that street was full of people and very noisy. To the left, the entrance of the old Opera House was brilliantly lighted, for on that evening, January 13, there was a grand masquerade ball—one of those festivals where charity is the pretext for revelry. The higher demi-monde was there in full blast. Marcel Besnard was tempted a moment to hire a domino and rush in the crowd. Certainly he would forget, in there! Let this night be over! Let daylight return! No; he passed on. The sidewalks were crowded, the stores open yet, the tradesmen behind their counters, night restaurants, candy stores, perfume venders, costumers, and the like.

At the end of the Passage de l'Opera an armorer was attracting the attention of the passers-by with the brightness of his window, where sabers, swords, hunting and military rifles shone brilliantly. On a stand was a row of revolvers. Marcel, like many of the promenaders, had stopped before the show window; he remained but a moment, then continued his walk.

Snow was again falling—a gale was blowing over Paris; so the young man came back into the covered gallery. There was nobody now in

front of the gunsmith's store; he halted, then approached and began to examine the weapons attentively.

Yes, how beautifully made were those little revolvers—regular jewels; one especially, with an ivory handle, was reflecting the light of the gas. O! how easy to carry, and worthy to be given as a present! "I know, Marcel, I know of a tie a thousand times stronger than marriage. It is called death! When your beloved deceives you, kill him or her."

Quickly Marcel walked off, but soon stopped short. The shining revolver was drawing him to it; he entered the store.

The gunsmith advanced to meet him.

"What do you wish ,sir?"

"How much is this revolver, the one with the ivory handle?"

The man took from the window the desired weapon.

"A real jewel, sir, the 'French and National Colt;' patented by our firm. Look at it; it has a safety lock, and never misses fire; it is admirable! Price: sixty francs."

Marcel threw the money on the counter and took possession of the attractive little weapon; he handled and turned it every way.

"A box of cartridges goes with it," added the dealer.

"No matter, keep it," was the rather sur-

prising answer. "Ah! would you please load the weapon for me?"

The man placed six cartridges in the six chambers.

"There it is, sir," he said, handing it back to its owner; "just the thing for thieves of money or love."

Without even smiling at the joke, Marcel put the pistol in his pocket and departed.

For a few seconds, the eyes of the inventor of the "French and National Colt" followed the sinister retreating figure; then he walked to the back of the store, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well!" murmured he, "another husband!"

On the Boulevard, Marcel noticed some hacks standing at the curb, and calling up one of them, he said:

"Ten francs if you take me quickly to Passy at the bottom of the Boulainvilliers Street!"

The horse started on a gallop; and half an hour later Marcel alighted at the foot of the hill.

Though it was so late and the weather so cold, the hill was not deserted as usual. Here and there, he could see human forms gliding through this solitude.

At the corner of the Street des Jardins stood a mysterious looking carriage without any lamps, a coupé. Marcel examined it and

on the door was a monogram, C and L entwined. La Chesnaye!

Insane with rage, the lover felt for the handle of his pistol, and rushed into the alley.

The storm had ceased—only a few flakes of snow flew through the air; but in this narrow street the melting snow and ice made a great deal of mud, and there arose an odor of damp wood and rotten leaves. Low-hanging clouds obscured the rays of the new moon, and rendered the alley very dark. The silence was almost appalling.

The house remained discreetly closed, though one could see a streak of light at each window.

They were there!

Marcel glided along the wall of the park. He climbed on a stone and with both hands seized the hanging branches of ivy.

Just then the moon shone, and he saw at the other end of the alley two men walking slowly. Suddenly they rushed toward him, shouting like mad. Confound it! He had been seen! But too late!

With one bound he had reached the top of the wall; a jump—and he fell among the bushes, disentangled himself, rapidly crossed the lawn, and never stopped till he stood on the steps, breathless.

The shutters were closed, but behind them he heard low voices!

Marcel shook the shutters violently; they gave way; they were not hooked inside.

There was a gentle cry in the room; then it grew suddenly dark; "they" had put out the lights. With all his weight Marcel bore on the door; it flew open. It was not even bolted.

The madman rushed ahead.

Then, the light reflected by the snow being let in, he saw a shadow hurrying away. Grasping his revolver, he aimed at random and fired.

Almost immediately the would-be murderer felt himself borne to the floor, knees pressing on his breast, his wrist twisted and his revolver snatched from him. But he offered no resistance, neither did he try to defend himself; he remained there prostrate and helpless ——

In the house, everything was confusion, hurrying steps and smothered exclamations, a sort of silent tumult; then the noise of a door; then the rumble of a carriage rolling away.

A man's voice was now raised, this time loud and clear, that of La Chesnaye. It said:

"Feel easy, gentlemen; the Emperor is not wounded."

The Emperor!

At last the room was lighted up; policemen came in with torches. In front of them stood Princess di Carpegna, disheveled, half dressed, and deathly pale.

She ran towards him whom they were hold-

PASTARELLA

ing down on the floor, leaned over to see his face and uttered a cry, the cry of a wounded wild beast.

"You! Oh! the ruffians! It is Marcel they have sent here!"

Then straightening herself up, and speaking to the crowd, she shrieked:

"Well, take us away together, vile rabble! This man is my lover, and I am his accomplice!"

PART THE THIRD

I

VERY URGENT

ON Friday, the 15th of January, 1858, when Paris awoke, it heard of Orsini's attempt on the life of the Emperor. The news, however, spread very slowly, and on the outskirts of the city they only heard of it late in the forenoon.

On that day, it was about nine o'clock, when the oldmaid servant, Philomène, entered her master's apartment, bringing him the morning mail—two letters and a few newspapers.

Count Besnard was already dressed to go out with Marie-Anne to hear their daily mass. He seemed to be suffering more than usual. Of late, his thin, consumptive face had taken a purplish hue; he complained of his legs being swollen, and of a painful tension of the veins of the neck; his heart troubled him constantly; his breath was short and came by jerks; at times he seemed almost suffocating. The day before, his physician, feeling more and more anxious, had ascertained the rapid progress of the cardiac hypertrophia. According to the method then in use, he had increased the dose

of digitalis, prescribed that terrible drug, hellebore, and above all, recommended that his patient should have no anxieties or emotions of any kind.

No emotions! When, for the last forty-eight hours, the Count had gone through such mortal anxieties!

No news from his son! What had become of Marcel? He had left the palace of the Council of State, Wednesday, towards six o'clock in the evening, and ever since they had been waiting for him! What new act of folly had this young man, forsaken of God, been guilty of? And how many more tears of grief or shame was the father to shed over this son?

When Marie-Anne saw Philomène enter with the letters on a salver, she ran towards her.

"Give! give them to me!"

The young girl looked at the envelopes and dropped them, discouraged; neither of them was in her brother's writing.

Two official letters: a square one with the blue sign of the Council of State; another, smaller and less formal, with the red seal of some minister; both were marked: P. O. *Very urgent.*

Without a word Count Besnard took these letters and broke the seals. One was the notice

of a meeting, written in an unusually pressing style:

SIR AND DEAR COLLEAGUE:—His Honor, the President of the Council of State, has decided to call together the Council of State, in an extraordinary and general assembly to-day, at three o'clock, punctually. You are expected to be present. Object: Important communications from the government and reading of an address to His Majesty the Emperor.

The Master of Requests, General Secretary of the Council of State. BOILAY.

"What is the matter now?" muttered Count Besnard, surprised at these unusual formulas. "The *Moniteur* is going to tell me, no doubt."

He tore the wrapper around the Government journal, glanced at it, and uttered an exclamation.

"Another attempt! The scoundrels!"

Then, greatly agitated, and, for the time being, forgetting the other letter, the one with the red seal, he opened the official newspaper, and began to read aloud:

"Last night, at half-past eight, as their Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress, arrived at the Opera, three explosions were heard.

"Many persons who stood in front of the theater were wounded; several seriously.

"Neither the Emperor nor the Empress were hit.

"A searching investigation was begun at

once; several persons have already been arrested."

Count Besnard threw down the paper and began to walk to and fro in the greatest excitement.

"What a horror!" he cried; "but, no wonder, with such ministers! Not one of them watches over his master's safety nor over that of unhappy France! They are all entirely wrapt up in their pleasures, these fellows! In their hands, the country has become a vile resort, a home for conspirators! Even our judges do not escape the disease! Oh! how these second of December men have deceived our Christian hopes! How often have I been ashamed of my former credulity, and found myself crying over the fate of those I once caused to cry! What do they expect from us to-day, these fops who are our ministers? They want exceptional laws, no doubt, to save their weak selves. No! no! The time has come for you to disappear, gentlemen; you are condemned! As for me, if my conscience commands me to fight against you, no matter what happens, I shall fight you ——"

"Oh! father," begged Marie-Anne, "out of pity for us, do think of your health!"

But the old man's only answer was one of those gestures with which Macbeth sent "to the dogs" the doctor as well as the medicine.

And the judge without mercy, the purveyor of gallows and exiles, the "White Butcher," took long strides about the room, giving utterance to his unbounded disappointment as a Catholic, and his remorse as an honest man.

After a time, this feverish anger cooled down, and Count Besnard sat down again to his desk. Then his eyes fell on the second letter—the one with the red seal—which, in his agitation, he had neglected to open. He took it and turned it over between his fingers:

"Ah! ah!" he said, "a love letter from the Secretary of State! the most subtle corrupter of this government; my superior and, besides, my personal enemy! 'Per Order,' and 'Very urgent.' Gracious! so much business! Why does the gentleman honor me with his prose?"

He tore the envelope, and his face expressed the greatest surprise.

"Mon Dieu! what does it all mean? Help me to understand, darling; listen:

"MONSIEUR le Comte: His Honor, the Secretary of State, desires to see you without delay about a subject of the greatest importance, which concerns you personally. You will please come as soon as you receive this letter. His Honor will await you until eleven o'clock.

The Private Secretary,

BARON EPHRAIM COHEN.

"A subject of the greatest importance which concerns you personally," repeated Count Bes-

nard, and the fingers that held the letter began to tremble. "No, I do not guess! What mystery is this? What can that man wish of me with his poor grammar and his commanding language?"

He rang the bell nervously, and a servant rushed in.

"A carriage! Do not expect me soon! I shall not return before night."

Then, coming near Marie-Anne, and kissing her on the forehead, he added, very gently:

"As for you, my dear, go to Saint-Valère. I cannot accompany you there to-day. Excuse me before the Lord. Pray fervently, my daughter. Implore Divine mercy for both of us—for me, for him—for him especially."

"Him," was the absent, the child found again but, alas! lost again, the son of his tears and of his anger.

II

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

IN those days of absolute, personal, silent government, the ministers of the Empire were nothing more nor less than simple clerks of the Emperor, chosen or rejected according to caprice or whim. Favor raised them, disgrace caused their fall. The Parliament then—a Parliament without a voice—knew them not, and was not even expected to know them.

Most of them, men of merit, excellent employés, trained to the duties of administration, working for the good of the service and knowing how to do it, had not in them, however, the least notion of exalted political virtue. The independence of the mind was totally wanting, and, more so, that of the soul. None of these "chief clerks" had the supreme quality which alone raises human nature and produces great men: character. None dared to be himself. Catholics, when the Emperor treated with Catholics; free-traders, when the Sovereign, a friend of Cobden, believed in free trade; at times, helping the cause of the "Nationalists"—for their master, the former "Carbonaro" had been a "Nationalist"—the

only conception of those worshipers of the Imperial Idol was "The Napoleonic idea." These two words filled their mouths, and was invariably found in the wording of their circulars; they were their catechism, their dogma, their creed, the cross sent by God to blindly adore. They were men of ability certainly; but, in high-class politics, petty devices are not real ability. Too much like those courtiers who abused Versailles, the new valets at the Tuileries had no other conscience but to serve well; anxious to be useful, and at times necessary; but above all, agreeable. Never did adulation, even at the time of Louis XIV show itself more shameless than at the time of the second Empire. "Napoleon the Great! I mean *ours*," one of the ministers would say, and another would add: "Before the genius of the second Bonaparte, I remain petrified and dumb!" These men exist no longer, and the critics leave their memory no rest. Nevertheless they have done great things, though not great themselves. History will say so, too. But it will say also that their detestable flatteries have perverted and led to its ruin a noble nature, the strange dreamer, the man with a robust intelligence and a weak will: Napoleon III.

But, alas, among the French people, the most skeptical and credulous of all peoples, what public man will dare say that he has never lied

to those in power! Formerly worshipers of kings; now flatterers of the voters. Our fathers knew them in the former state; now we see them in their latest guise.

As they generally worked each one separately with the Emperor, those ministers were jealous of one another; but, though divided by envy, a common hatred had brought them together: the hatred of a colleague, the Secretary of State.

This title was an institution handed down from the Great Empire of 1805, and the bearer of it, without holding any specific attributions, could aspire to all sorts of political favors. As administrator of household expenditures, vice-president of the "family council"—the Bonaparte family council—keeper of the fortune and honor of the Napoleons, working privately and daily with the Sovereign, and possessor of mysterious secrets, this minister might indeed have thought himself Prime Minister, for he was a great favorite at the Tuileries.

He pleased the imperial inmates as the trusty confident of the husband's escapades; and he pleased them again as the comforter of the wives' suspicions. Soon his influence was recognized as a power behind the throne. The other ministers detested him, but in the way they detest in Eastern countries—with lavish smiles.

In this "star chamber," called the Tuileries, a few temporary favorites had sought his ruin. Then began a strife, discreet but merciless, when each word was an insinuation, each reticence a calumny; when even silence wounded. But all to no purpose, the Secretary of State came out victorious. At the time of which we speak, his mysterious power almost dared to show itself openly, and his influence was at its height. Being the first at court, he thought himself the second in France. The public did not know that such a power existed; but in the Imperial circles they knew it but too well. As he countersigned all the important decrees, this minister took upon himself to exercise control over all the high functionaries and submitted them to a strict discipline. As he had charge of all the governmental relations of the Emperor with the different bodies of the Empire he tyrannized over the Council of State which he thoroughly disliked because it contained some men who had preserved a little pride at that time of universal servility. Whether from weakness or helplessness, Baroche, the president of that body, found it hard to be heard at the Tuileries, and allowed the Secretary of State full sway, leaving many of these councilors to become the victims of his malice.

Among them Count Besnard was the one he

disliked the most. The Count was too stiff in his views of morality, his language too haughty; and, ever since the old magistrate had delivered a certain speech to express his surprise at certain men and certain things, boldly declaring:

"I have had twenty-four years' experience in the practice of law; but I did not know until to-day what a public swindle really was!"

"Your insolence will be punished sooner or later, Count Besnard," his adversary had muttered under his breath. But the councilor, without suspecting, or heeding the coming storm, and not knowing how to smile back at smiling hatred, went on his honest course.

A strange government; a stranger minister. He was then a man about sixty years old, pale and thin, with a prominent nose, and a face framed in grey whiskers, homely but bright with intelligence. Bald, but, not being vain of his baldness, like "de Morny," he covered it with a fine black wig. That went against him with the ladies, for ivory heads were then in fashion, and they speak of a well-known deputy, a favorite with the Empress, who, being anxious to please, underwent a treatment to lose his hair. But what epoch has not its "style," or, in other words its "fad?"

Though he was born at Tarbes, that land of modern miracles, where the Virgin has such strange conversations with little shepherds, he

preferred to be called a Parisian. In fact, he was only a Jew; not a glorious descendant of Israel, thoughtful and poetical; but a Jew of the money worshiping kind. A bank had been his cradle, his family, his country.

Neither the Thora nor the Talmud, however, had been able to satisfy him. One fine day this son of Mammon had preferred the whole Bible to the Hebrew portion; he had chosen the Bible according to the Rev. J. S. Ostervald; he had become a Christian, but a Protestant Christian, perhaps out of admiration for the rich financiers of Geneva, perhaps so as to be able to preserve as much as possible of his Judaism. But he was no Puritan; a Huguenot according to the times, a religious man, worldly wise; nothing like Guizot, a great deal like Fazy, the Geneva democratic tyrant. A man of fine manners, amiable in the drawing room, and willing to play the gentleman of birth and dignity. It was most interesting to watch him at the court balls, looking grand in his coat, embroidered with gold, and the red ribbon thrown across his breast, going from one lady to another, whispering and flirting—risking a compliment here and there in the hope of an adventure; sometimes he was ill received, but never with indignation.

In the Government service he was another person altogether: harsh, dry, short, haughty,

keeping the upper hand over his inferiors, just as they overwork the clerks in Jewish counting houses.

As a private individual, he was not above reproach, by any means, and his escapades were the subject of many a joke behind the scenes; but he was kind to his relations.

As a public man, he had some good qualities: a respect for literature, a delicate taste in art, a marvelous dexterity in finances. His enemies —and they were numerous—denied him any virtues, and charged him with all the vices. They said he got rich with France's money; this was a lie—he had always been rich; that he was a libertine, because he was gallant; capable of any crime, when he was only ambitious. He let them talk; perfectly indifferent to criticism, and scathing indeed was his scorn of men and their petty calumnies. In short, he was a full-fledged skeptic, and reaped the benefits of his skepticism.

Nevertheless, this faithless man had an object of worship—the Empire; a god—the Emperor. Long before the 2nd of December, 1851, being a banker, he had placed a portion of his fortune at the disposal of the Prince-President. A risky experiment it was, money wildly invested; but a good investment after all, since the lender was now, not only Minister of State, but *de facto* Prime Minister. His favor ran high. His

titles were many. He wore on his breast decorations innumerable, and was in receipt of 250,000 francs yearly salaries. All these paraphernalia of ribbons and titles make us smile nowadays, as if we were above such things, but let the rising generation come. Will its criticism of us be any milder?

After all, he of whom we speak, did some good. When he died, towards the last days of the Empire, neglected by the Sovereign for whom he had dared everything, many mourned for him, and long after that, many remembered him. History will say of him he was a favored and fortunate man—fortunate because of his success in life, and his opportune death.

III

IN THE MINISTER'S PRIVATE OFFICE

WHEN Count Besnard entered the luxurious pavilion of the Tuileries, called the Carrousel Pavilion, where the Prime Minister held his court, the clock of the Palais-Royal marked ten o'clock.

Already the antechamber was full of petitioners, for it was Friday, an official reception day.

This crowd was a strange mixture of high and low beggars. Prefects with fine mustaches, stiff magistrates, Members of the Institute, priests intriguing for promotion, sculptors and painters begging for an order, plenty of journalists bringing with them their devotion and their debts; a great many theatrical people pretty singers, and stately comedians: one as brisk and smart as Dorante, the other as majestic as Agamemnon. Then among those black coats and frocks, were to be seen the painted faces of ballet-dancers. O! these well knew they would not have to wait long.

Every one in the expectant multitude, sat motionless on the chairs and benches, looking at each other; most of them dumb with anx-

iety. Slowly in front of them, walked back and forth a man with a shining steel chain around his neck, an important personage, Monsieur Morel, the chief of the ushers. At times, he would stop and suavely or severely, according to the person addressed, drop a few words:

"Please have patience, Monsieur le Prefet; His Excellence will receive you certainly. My Lord Bishop, the door will open before your Grandeur. You are wasting time, my dear sir; look at all these people; you had better go to the private secretary. Come, behave, madame; there are priests here."

Count Besnard gave his name; the usher wrote it on a loose piece of paper and entered the inner room. Almost immediately, he came back and called out in loud tones:

"The Councilor of State, Count Besnard!"

With a slow step and vainly trying to look unconcerned, this imperial functionary, so pompously designated, followed the usher. Though he had come last, he went in first. What was wanted of him in such a hurry?

A double door was thrown open before him.

In a superb office, draped with velvet of a somber hue, the Minister, pale and thin, was carelessly sitting in front of his huge desk. Count Besnard bowed; the other kept his seat, and with a curt gesture motioned him to a chair.

"Please be seated, sir."

Shocked at such an informal reception, the Councilor of State took the chair, and said very dryly:

"Your Excellency sent for me—what do you wish?"

No response. The little man, still stretched in his armchair, seemed sunk in meditation; his expression was disagreeable in the extreme, his stern eyes looked forbidding. Finally he replied:

"Yes, I sent for you, my poor Monsieur Besnard. Mon Dieu! what a terrible event!"

This familiar language, this condescending appellation, wounded the old man. "My poor Monsieur Besnard!" He was not accustomed to be pitied; his pride got the best of him, and he replied in a reproving tone:

"A terrible event? Yes, indeed! However, excuse my frankness, such events are becoming too frequent. Our people watch no longer, neither do they punish any more."

By "our people," he evidently meant the Government.

The Minister raised his head, and with a bitter smile, meeting haughtiness with haughtiness, said:

"A reprimand, sir? Please spare us! But of whom are you speaking? Of the criminals of last night? of the bandits of the Street Le

Peletier? I was talking of another criminal; of Marcel Besnard, your son."

"My son? Why is the name of my son mixed with this affair?"

Slowly and heartlessly, the Minister continued:

"Your son has attempted to assassinate the Emperor."

"My—my son!"

And the Count rose excitedly.

"You say? I do not understand—no, no, I do not understand!"

But soon, with a shrug of the shoulders and a scornful smile, he added:

"Your Excellency must be the victim of some cruel practical joke."

Unwilling to notice the reply, and accenting each word, the Minister proceeded:

"On the night of the 12th of January, the day before yesterday, at a woman's house, a certain Princess di Carpegna, your son attempted to kill the Emperor."

The Princess di Carpegna! Marcel's father fell back on his chair. He had turned painfully white; his heart beat violently; out of his contracted throat but one word could find its way:

"Absurd! Absurd!"

The other man did not even appear to notice the anguish of the old man, but coolly went on:

"Absurd; so it is! True, nevertheless; a great deal too true! You had better read this yourself. Here is the report of the preliminary examination of your son."

The Minister took some papers from his desk and handed them to the Count, who pushed them away.

"No, no; it is useless! He did not do it! It cannot be Marcel!"

"Well! my poor sir, it will be better for you then to ask the culprit himself. He is here; they will bring him to us."

The Minister rang a bell, and immediately a dapper little man, the private secretary, entered the room.

"Baron Ephraim, let them bring in Marcel Besnard. But use the greatest discretion! You possess, sir, a state secret of dreadful import."

The young man with the curly hair, a Baron in Israel, bowed humbly and retired.

A deadly silence now reigned between these two imperial functionaries. His Excellency sat calmly waiting, with folded arms, while the old Councilor of State bowed his head and leaned heavily on his cane. At times a deep sigh escaped him and was the only sound in this solemn moment, except the monotonous ticking of a wooden clock, and the crackling of the flames in the fireplace. At last a por-

tiere was raised and Marcel entered. A policeman accompanied him.

Pale and wretched, his eyelids red for want of sleep, his garments disorderly, his wrists bearing the marks of fetters, the young man looked like a malefactor who had already received the first caresses of dread Justice. When he saw his father, he turned faint. O! the unfortunate father! He, habitually, so full of a noble pride, how crushed he now looked with shame and despair in his eyes! Father, oh, father! And the son turned aside.

Standing in the middle of the room, he tried to put on a brave face. Through the strange sharpness of vision brought on by fever, he could see distinctly all the details of the surroundings, the bright ceiling, the awkward pattern and big flowers of the furniture; in a panel, the full-length portrait of Cardinal de Richelieu. What threatening looks it seemed to cast on him, this bloody Eminence, so pale in his purple robes! And, under this terrible image he saw the deceitful face of the Prime Minister.

A voice, that of Count Brutus, drew him from his lethargy. The old man had straightened himself up now, his head was erect, his looks stern. He began the interrogation.

"You must know, sir, of what they accuse you."

Without any hesitation, Marcel answered:

"I know but one thing—I have tried to kill."

"To kill! the Emperor!"

"I did not know the Emperor stood before me——"

He stopped and added lower:

"But, I must say—even knowing it, I would have——"

He stopped again, and suddenly, in a tone of utter desperation, he cried out:

"Pity, father! Pity! I was crazy—I was mad with love!"

A terrible look swept over the face of the old man as he bowed his head in silence. One could hear outside the confused murmur of a great city, and just then a noise of fife and drum was louder than the rest; it was a regiment of Grenadiers, in the Carrousel Square, relieving the sentries all over the Tuileries.

The Minister, during this time, was looking over some papers. Now in his turn he spoke:

"Marcel Besnard, the examination—Oh! a very superficial one—accuses you of premeditation and conspiracy ——"

"It is wrong."

"I hope so, for your sake. However, you must acknowledge that the Princess di Carpegna had managed to bring you and some Mazzinian conspirators together. One of the

rascals, who was arrested this morning, has solemnly declared it was so. Do not deny it; the fact is indisputable. Somebody saw you going in one of their dens in Montmartre; the janitor of the building has given your description. Besides, what could that woman mean when she cried out, speaking of you: 'This man is my lover, and I am his accomplice!' Is not that clear enough? A great deal too clear! Silence, I pray, let me finish—you must have surely known who this pretended Princess really was—No? It is not likely. This same Italian friend of the lady has just told us about her, a disreputable woman well known on the London streets, the Rosina Savelli, a ——"

Count Besnard uttered a cry of anguish, and said:

"Savelli! Her name is Savelli!"

"Yes, the daughter of a rebel in the Var insurrection; he whom his brethren and friends call ——"

The Minister stopped short: the remembrances of the bloody repression in the South were crowding in his mind. He did not dare to finish his sentence.

"Go on, sir," cried the Count, in a commanding voice, "he whom they call 'the Martyr shot twice!' Yes, twice tortured! and that by me! Oh! my God! Living Justice! God! God!"

Then hiding his face in his hands, he wept. The Minister motioned to the policeman:

"Take back your prisoner; but remain in the next room and await my orders."

The policeman pushed Marcel before him, for he was petrified by the revelation he had just heard, and the two went out.

Again the Prime Minister and the Count were alone; again face to face.

A few minutes elapsed, slow and silent.

Afar the music of the regiment had played the tune of the *Reine Hortense;* soon it began the tune of former victories: *Veillons au Salut de l'Empire.* Suddenly a loud acclamation rung all over the Carrousel; the Emperor had just appeared on the balcony of the palace.

On hearing this, the Minister left his arm-chair, and approaching Marcel's father:

"You hear, sir? What enthusiasm! What cries of joy! No one to-day would dare say that the silence of the people is the lesson of kings. The Empire is henceforth indestructible."

He looked for a moment at the mute old man; then, in a gentle tone, full of compassion, he added: "Have courage! The Emperor, my dear Count, esteems and loves you; and we, we have entire confidence in your loyalty."

"My dear Count!" how condescending all of a sudden.

His Excellency waited awhile, and then, still more affable, said :

"Monsieur Besnard, the State Council is going to meet presently for an extraordinary session. You shall be present, I suppose?"

"I?—I?—" stammered the unfortunate man. "No! I belong no longer to that body, and I now tender my resignation to you."

"What folly! We refuse to accept it!"

"But," replied the Count with unutterable bitterness, "I cannot remain a Councilor of the Empire, when my son is an assassin of the Emperor!"

"We refuse your resignation! France needs your talents. So, you see, it is settled, you will be there. The Ministers will all be present, and I shall be there also. We expect, gentlemen of the Council, to submit to you a very important bill, a special law to provide for the general security. It is proper that, in to-day's address which the Council is to send to the Sovereign, this body should ask for this law of repression. To take such a step would be to its credit; it would give us an assurance of its devotion and would produce an excellent moral effect at large. We must do away with the anarchists and criminal disturbers! You must join with us in asking for all those detestable citizens to be proclaimed outlaws. This includes, of course, the men of 1848, the

former reds ; it is an illegal measure, no doubt --being retroactive--but all the same, it is just and necessary."

" How can it be just, being illegal ? " timidly asked Count Besnard.

But the Minister, still smiling his peculiar smile, went on :

" Yes, I know ! You keep up your old standard of judicial honor ! You protest ; you rebel ! Very respectable scruples, I know ; but let me proceed. The legislative bodies will vote the proposed bill with enthusiasm. But you, gentlemen of the State Council ? You have become lately somewhat rebellious opponents of the most protective measures ; come, we know you by heart. Some of your troublesome colleagues will make a fuss, cry tyranny, and, perhaps, prevent our projects from succeeding. You, my dear friend, you will vote this law. Better still, your eloquence has great weight in the Council. Your colleagues, those admirers of principles and high-flown theories, willingly give up to you ; you are besides—do not deny it—the leader of a little opposition, dangerous to us, and still more so to yourselves. So to-day, in a few hours, you must speak. Do not say No ! You *must speak*, sir ! "

The Count slowly raised his head.

"And what about my conscience ? " murmured he.

With a familiar gesture, the Minister placed his hand on the Count's shoulder.

"Your conscience, my dear sir? It will understand readily that you are a father, that your son implores, and that France commands."

The face of the old man turned purple with shame, his eyes flashed, and his lips expressed boundless scorn. But, rising suddenly, and humbly bowing, he said:

"My conscience has understood you too well, Sir. I shall speak in favor of your law."

IV

THE MINISTER'S KINDNESS

WHEN the door was closed behind the Count, the Prime Minister resumed his seat. The smile had disappeared from his face, the man was himself again, uneasy and anxious.

For a little while he seemed to be lost in thought: his forehead was covered with perspiration, his body twitched nervously, and revealed the agitation of his mind; soon he got up and walked to and fro uneasily. Now and then he stopped before a picture—the red one—that of Armand du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu; and looked at it intently.

The contemplation of this great man of "probity without scruples" probably quieted him, for he went back to his chair and rang for Baron Ephraim.

"Send in Monsieur Marcel Besnard, and dismiss the policeman who accompanies him. One more word. Here is a letter for the Secretary of the Interior; take it to him yourself. Tell him I answer for everything, but that I must be left to do as I think best! I need twenty-four hours. I will be responsible!"

He held out the confidential message to the dainty little Baron, who went out to fulfill his instructions.

Alone once more, the Minister's agitation returned; he dropped his brow between his hands; he was actually trembling under the strain of his emotion.

The noise of an opening door made him raise his head; Marcel Besnard had entered.

A few seconds elapsed in silence.

The Minister looked sternly at the young man, who was timidly and anxiously waiting for an interrogation.

Finally, with a dramatic gesture, he said:

"You are free, Besnard."

Incredulous astonishment appeared on Marcel's face; the other went on:

"I say, you are free. Do you hear me?"

His voice was harsh, his face had resumed its unfeeling mask. He continued:

"Now that you are free, what do you expect to do?"

"Whatever I am told."

"This is as it should be. However, understand me aright. I act on my own responsibility; the Public Prosecutor has not given up the affair; to-morrow, to-day, he may have you arrested again. Do you understand? No, I see you do not. I will try to be clearer. You, the son of a very high Imperial functionary,

you cannot, you must not be seen sitting in the pen of the common criminals. What are your intentions then?"

"To leave the country."

"A very poor plan. They will ask for your extradition. You have not understood me yet, it seems. Listen further—Your name and title are Monsieur le Vicomte Besnard; you have a position in the Council of State, and your father occupies a high office in the Empire. You must not be prosecuted, even in your absence. Am I clear enough, now?"

He waited for the answer. Both men were looking at each other in a dreadful silence, both very pale. And the time was flying; soon it would be twelve o'clock; at one, precisely, there was to be a meeting of the Council of Ministers at the Tuileries.

"Well, I see; you will not understand," cried the Minister rudely; "I thought you were intelligent, and they say you are brave. What you have to do, the *only thing* you have to do —is—to disappear."

At the blow of this fearful command Marcel shuddered; he walked straight up to his insulter, and leaning towards him, said:

"So, you require me, sir, to kill myself?"

His Excellency remained immovable.

"Oh!" he said at last, speaking very slowly,

"this is a very harsh word—still, as you please—I said simply, disappear."

"Disappear"—and Marcel smiled bitterly. "Be it so, then; let the word stand—I understand now."

He took a step backward, crossed his arms; and in his turn questioned:

"And the Princess Carpegna, what becomes of her?"

"That woman has left France."

Marcel Besnard laughed nervously:

"O! that's Imperial clemency! I understand again! All right! Now the son of that very high functionary is ready to die."

At that moment, the clock on the mantelpiece was heard; it was striking twelve. The Minister pointed to it.

"The disappearance will be secret, will it not? Especially avoid family scenes: spare your father. Twelve o'clock! Monsieur le Vicomte Besnard, you have twenty-four hours before you."

He rose, to cut short the conversation, and, with the same theatrical gesture, he added:

"I have your word; you are free."

The son of Count Brutus bowed, and slowly retired.

When the velvet portiere had dropped and restored solitude and quiet around him, the Minister now paler than ever, sank on a sofa.

"Horrible," he muttered, "heinous, perhaps! but I save the Empire from scandal, and what matters a life more or less!"

V

THE CHRIST IN NOTRE DAME

THE crowd which had just filled the court-yard of the Carrousel, had scattered. The military parade was over; no more Grenadiers marching and keeping step with the balancing of their high fur caps; no more music and beating of drums; of course, no more enthusiastic loafers and policemen; all the "Long live the Emperor!" had ceased. Alone in the vast yard of the Tuileries, on the right and left of the Arc de Triumph, were the two sentries immovable on their horses, draped in their showy red cloaks. The north wind was blowing; under the bluish-gray sky, the cold was dry, parching the faces of the passers-by.

Count Besnard had now reached the Royal bridge. Like a body unconscious of its acts, of the hour or of the distance, he was mechanically wending his steps towards the Palace of the State Council; but at the corner of the Pavilion of Flora he stopped short; the thought of Self had come back.

Yes, certainly, he was to speak to-day, defend the ministerial law, and, with the price of his

honor, perhaps save his child ; but the moment of the most cruel torture had not come yet. He had three hours yet to be himself ! Quickly, Count Besnard turned back and hurried along. He was walking ahead, at random, along the quays, with listless eyes fixed on the greenish water of the Seine. Having taken no nourishment since the day before, the effort covered him with perspiration, and in spite of the icy cold air of the river, he felt a sensation of extreme heat. His head ached as well as his heart. But he kept on, speaking to himself ; and the people that passed him turned around and smiled. Sometimes a cry of anger would escape his lips, and he would say : " The wretch ! " but soon his voice would soften, and he would say : " The unfortunate ! "

The vibrations of a clock aroused him from this kind of somnambulism. He was now opposite the City Hall, and the clock was striking twelve. Immediately the silvery tones fell from the St. Gervais steeple ; then again, slower and more solemn, the bell of St. Séverin answered, and the *Angelus* was repeated from one parish to another. At that moment the religious soul of Paris seemed with one impulse to rise in the space filled with the Eternal.

Involuntarily carried away, the Count Besnard was listening to the *Ave Maria* from all those bells. A scruple had just assailed his

conscience. What! He was suffering and he was not praying. To the right, above the houses bordering the river, he could see the proud profile of Notre Dame, with its towers rising towards the sky, and its austere nave spreading its amplitude: a jewel, a symbol, a whole prayer in stone. And gently, gravely, the *Angelus* from the Cathedral Church, was inviting him in. "*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis!*" O! yes, Comforter, in a day of such affliction, it is sweet to cry to Thee!

The unfortunate father hurried towards the sanctuary, answering the divine call, and soon reached the square, at that time so picturesque, where, even to-day, the pious thought of past ages reveals itself in a sublime manner. The hospital of the Hotel Dieu is there under the shadow of Notre Dame, the house of suffering under the mantle of the Mother of Sufferings.

Count Besnard entered the portal of the Zodiac, one of the four gates so wonderfully "barred" by the sculptured devil.

At that hour of the day, the church was almost deserted; under the stained glass of the tall windows, the center nave spread its solitude and immensity, while, behind the shadow of the great pillars, the aisles were dark. The organs kept silent, the priests had retired; not a sound to be heard. It was really, at that

moment, the "*Domus Dei*," the mysterious dwelling of the Absolute, full of mystery.

In that obscurity, in that vast silence that seemed like the commencement and end of all terrestrial things, how much more the Imminent, the Infinite, the Never and the Always, the Eternal Now, must have been felt evoking the true Spirit of Worship, than in the midst of human hymns so soon hushed, and the light of candles so quickly put out.

In the northern aisle, towards which Count Besnard turned to go, the iron gates of the side chapel were closed. One of them, however, was partly open, and he stepped in and sat down before the altar. At least, he thought, no one will come in here and disturb my devotions.

At first he did not notice in the shadow, a strange object resting against the wall. It was a gigantic crucifix, a work of the XII. century, both roughly hewn and grandly expressed. With unskilled fingers, the admirable maker of this figure, had tried to put in the wood all the ardor, all the tenderness, all the dread, all the mysticism of his Christian faith. He had chosen the moment, when the Son of God, having become truly a man through suffering, utters towards His Father His cry of human despair—the terrible "*Lama Sabachthani*"—"Why hast thou forsaken me?" The legs and the

arms were twisted, the convulsed breast showed the thin skeleton of the thorax; from the forehead crowned with thorns, and from the pierced sides, blood dropped down like tears; the head had drooped on the shoulder, in horrible agony; the mouth partly open seemed to smile. Another moment, and the holy breath was going to pass from Calvary, over Jerusalem, the Gentiles, and the world. The "*Consummatum est*" would be accomplished. By the livid light of the stained glass window, this image was frightful to look at! Count Besnard had not yet seen it. Broken down with fatigue and shivering with fever, he fell heavily on a chair, his back turned to the image, apparently deprived of all sensation of body and mind, his soul in a strange lethargy. A confused noise of steps and chants startled him at last.

Over there in the northern transept, they were having a funeral; a very modest one; nothing but a low mass in a side chapel, no organ playing; a simple psalm only, mumbled by the priest, and his one assistant; the humble funeral of an humble one of this world.

From where he sat, the Count could not see anything, but he understood, however. Another wretch out of his misery! He knelt down, remembering that he came in to pray. But his prayer was slow and painful; it did not come from his heart. "*Pater noster, fiat volun-*

tas tua." Oh! How hard Thy will, Lord, Thou who triest so severely an old man and a father.

Soon, above the murmurs of the officiating priest arose the chanted psalms. They were rendering the formidable prose, the canticle of fright, the *Dies iræ*, and the kneeling soul of the Count heard and translated: "Day of anger, day of days! Death has spread its standard; this century has crumbled into dust."

But little by little, a strange hallucination took possession of the listening man—he thought he was present at his own funeral; he, who had been so long judge of men, was placed himself in judgment; he was appearing before the Incorruptible, he was pleading his own cause.

The chanting voices went on lamenting: "Oh, unfortunate, what shall I answer? What will my defense be at that hour when even the just will be in agony?"

And he answered:

"Behold! I have kept Thy commandments; I have practiced abstinence, mortified the flesh by fasting. Every morning I have devotedly heard mass, and, several times a year, I have received the holy sacrament of communion. I am a Christian! Why then, dost Thou so harshly punish the servant of Thy law?"

And again: "I have always been honest and conscientious. Never did I take into con-

sideration the person of the criminal, but the crime. I remember one day when I called for a sentence to be passed upon a rich murderer; the family of the criminal dared to offer me a large sum of money if I would find some extenuating circumstances — the head of the murderer fell.

"I remember also that in prosecuting a fraudulent bankrupt, a relation of the man, an influential minister, tried to make me condone the crime—the thief went to the galleys. I am very poor in this world's goods! Why, then, dost thou so harshly punish an honest man?"

Suddenly he shuddered. An ironical voice—where did it come from?—had whispered to him, asking:

"What of Savelli?"

The Count turned quickly around, and there against the wall, his gaze met the crucified God smiling—He who came into the world, not to bring peace, but the sword.

With his eyes riveted to the spot, the dreamer looked at this formidable image; then, struck with terror, he fell face forward to the floor, as did those seraphic monks who had reached the seventh degree of ecstasy, when the veil which hid the Adonaï was torn open before them. Now the prayer which was burning like lava flew from his lips.

"Yes, yes; thou art the Equitable, the God

of Truth who detests 'whited sepulchers' and Pharisaic consciences! Savelli! The blood of that one trial stains yet my magisterial gown; it is on my hands, all over me! It drowns me, it smothers me! Savelli! I have received the price of that death, and my reward is still with me—*pecunia mea mecum.* I am a Councilor of State! Savelli! Oh! mysterious justice, implacable patience of Eternity! It is the daughter of that man who kills my child! She embodies the law of Talion, she comes as thine avenger! God! God! God!"

He raised his head, and stretched his hands towards the cross.

"Immanent, Immanent, thou chastiseth me keenly! But thou art right! Thou art right! For my soul is vile, and my heart cowardly. Again, I have committed prevarication; I have ignored my conscience. I have promised this dishonest Minister to defend his law; an infamous law, which is to strike so many innocent ones; a desperate law, which will cause many a father like me to shed bitter tears. Oh, my Lord, say, oh, say! What must I do?"

Then by the pale light of the stained glass window he thought he saw the angry smile change into a kindly one, and there, before him, there he saw the sculptured Christ stretching forth his head, as if to allow the words of his command to pass out.

"Thy duty!" ordered the silent voice.

"My duty?" gasped the poor soul, in unutterable distress. "And Marcel, my poor child?"

But Christ on the crucifix, still gentle and enigmatic:

"Thy whole duty, thy expiatory duty, so that I may be able to give thee, my friend—to give thee, at the last, the heavenly kiss of peace."

VI

THE COUNCIL OF STATE

CERTAINLY, the Council of State of the Second Empire was a grand assembly; the equal, indeed, of its elder, the author of the civil Code and the Concordat. Like it, it worked hard, it was well trained in all its duties, honest, honorable and highly intelligent. The magistrates in its bosom were numerous, chosen from the Court of Appeals, the élite among the first presidents and public prosecutors, a few prefects, renowned engineers, illustrious soldiers, and even eight members of the Institute.

They used to say then—and rightly—that the soul of France had passed wholly into this Council. And, in fact, it accomplished great things very simply. It worked hard, and its powerful brain brought forth wonderful results. All the decrees, all the various and minute regulations in the administration which made Imperial France so rich—perhaps too rich—were its work. Our codes, altered according to the progressive evolution of morals; truths of political economy introduced in our laws; the agreement between labor and capital; the hardships of the working people alleviated, their

poor protected at last; and, at the same time, admirable measures of public usefulness inaugurated: the national fortune increased, becoming almost opulence; eighteen thousand miles of railroads opened through the land; the ports of Marseillles, Havre, Bordeaux and Brest enlarged; the pier of Cherbourg completed when six preceding governments had failed to do it; Saint Nazaire harbor growing entirely out of the sands of the Loire; elsewhere, useless land made fruitful, covered with forests and harvests; fevers eradicated; our cities rebuilt or made healthful—marvelous cities they are now: this is what those men of the Council of State have accomplished, such men as Michel Chevalier, Leplay, Bonjean, Vuitry, Forcade, Herman, Cornudet, Franqueville, Genteur, Conti, Cormenin, Vuillefroy and one other—a beloved dead, the only one I dare not name, the only one I cannot name—those are now simple, but piously preserved memories, for I have named only those who are at rest forever. Alas! why has France already forgotten even the names of those passionately dutiful, truly great men, when she is so prodigal of praises for the vain rhetoric and the hollow pomposity of so many so-called orators? Is it because they have tried to do nothing but what was right? Yes, for eighteen years they have been the very soul of France; they have embodied her courage and her hon-

esty. Alone, in the vast silence of the whole nation, they have dared to raise their voices, but it was only to be useful; and it was done without any personal consideration, without theatrical declamations, without courting a degrading popularity, without any other applause than that of their consciences. They were, indeed, honest men!

It was about three o'clock when the Count, coming out of his prolonged and feverish ecstacy, came out of Notre Dame. Still numb from his mystic dream, he stepped into a carriage and drove to the Palace d'Orsay. Already the hall was full of people and each one at his post, from the Ministers to the reading clerks.

This hall, afterwards destroyed by the flames of the Commune, occupied nearly all the front of the palace looking toward the Seine. It formed a rectangular space, and might have contained about two hundred seats. Proud white marble columns with gilded bronze capitals decorated it, but the whole aspect was rather severe.

On the walls, panels served as frames for pictures. First, and overlooking the assembly, was a famous painting by Hippolyte Flandrin —his "*Napoleon Legislator.*" Standing on the highest steps of the Imperial throne, his forehead crowned with laurels, draped in purple

with golden bees, the pale Cæsar, solemnly holding it with both hands, was presenting to France the table of the new laws for new times —his "Code Napoleon." On the right and the left were portraits of his advisers: the great Jurists of the year 12—Cambaceres, Portalis, Tronchet, Merlin, Regnault de Saint-Jean-d' Angély. Thus the Councils of both Empires found themselves face to face. Opposite, there was a platform for the Presidential chair, and those of the Ministers; in front of this platform were the raised seats of the Councilors of State; and on both sides were more modest chairs for officials of less importance. No tribune; each spoke from his seat. Such is the restraint on eloquence in wise England, so that simplicity and good faith be preserved. So, in that blessed land of liberty, we never see those popular insanities brought about by sonorous words and theatrical gestures.

Foreseeing a long debate, the hall was lighted up and the curtains drawn; but the ceiling was so high and the place so large that it was rather dark, notwithstanding all the lamps. The meeting had not begun, and an ill-concealed agitation filled the hall with murmurs, the older Councilors looking very much perturbed and whispering audibly. The others formed groups and discussed the events. They were talking of the outrage in the Street Le

Peletier, of the number of Frenchmen that had been wounded by Italian bombs; wondering what that mysterious law of general safety was to be; some even repeating the smart remark of one of the Ministers, who had said: "We must at last muzzle the beast!" But this "Beast" whose mouth they wanted to close, and whose teeth they wanted to break, what was it? Was it France, and its last liberties?

From the platform, the President now pronounced the ordinary formula: "Gentlemen, the meeting is open," and began his speech at once.

Monsieur Baroche was a fine speaker, with an imposing head, serious looking whiskers and an august baldness. A former Public Prosecutor, he had preserved from his judiciary functions, very solemn gestures, and a prolific language, without any real eloquence. He could speak of anything, for anything, against anything. Always warming up and carried away, always convinced; a brilliant barrister. So he spoke that day, growing impressive, vehement, insulting men and things; he solemnly begged of his colleagues to take their part in the misfortunes of the country. The Council of State was going to send an address to the Emperor; but it must be full of love and also full of hate; it must dare to do violence to the too kind

sovereign, require of him strong measures against political crimes, their authors and accomplices; in short it must propose a law of general safety.

This superb indignation being visibly overdone, the Keeper of the Seals spoke to place things in their right light. Much less flowery than the President, the Minister of Justice, a small man with a sharp and cutting voice, analyzed briefly the ten articles of the projected law, which was to be discussed later. A terrible law, one of those *leges horrendi carminis*, as the Latin jurists would have called it!

Several of the measures were really atrocious. Through a monstrous retroaction, they made outlaws of those who seven years before had opposed the establishment of the Empire, and gave them up entirely to the police. A simple order from a Minister was enough to exile them away from their country, and even to imprison them for an unlimited period and without trial. So the hard road to exile was open again; again the Cemetery of Lambessa was to be filled with the unfortunate. The "Beast" which they wanted to muzzle, was France herself. O, France, the old land of Gaul, too long trodden by the Roman Cæsars, why so much fratricidal hatred in the hearts of thy children? Why always and always this insane persecution among thy sons? O, you

creators of revolutionary Tribunals, High Courts of Justice, etc., etc. Monarchy, Empire of Republic—will you all never bear in history any other name than tyranny!

The analysis of the projected law was received with an icy respect. Soon, however, rumors went from seat to seat: "The Government wanted to take the Council by surprise! The law would be unconstitutional! It was a work of vengeance, not of justice!" Then a profound silence of expectation. Who would dare to speak?

At that moment the Secretary of State leaned towards the President of the Council, who then immediately addressed the assembly:

"Gentlemen, does some one wish to speak upon the question at issue?"

Then, in the midst of a profound silence, a voice was heard:

"I do!"

And Count Brutus Besnard rose.

VII

THE KISS OF PEACE

HAVING entered a few moments before the beginning of the session, Count Besnard, avoiding his colleagues, had gone straight to his usual place, in the third row, to the right of the President. There, crossing his arms and closing his eyes, he appeared to all to be slumbering. They knew he was sick, full of melancholy, rather strange in his ways; they had respected his solitude.

He was watching, though, with both mind and heart. Under the veil formed by his eyelids he could see. He could see former days: his Marcel a little child, who, by the blonde head of his sister, leaned his brunette head over the Gospel in which they were learning to pray and read. "That word, Marcel, is the sweet name of Jesus." "Father, the God of little children, is He not?" "Yes, He who rewards parents by uniting them some day and forever to their beloved ones." "Father, is this Paradise?"

And again another vision arose: time had flown so rapidly; his wee baby had grown to

manhood, into a young man of proud and noble mein, who was kneeling and said:

"To-day, I am going to fight for your honor; bless me, father." Then, with a sob, a cry mounted to the son's lips. "Pardon me, father, I was insane. I loved! Father!" In joy, as in pain, the same appellation, always and always: "Father." Ah! the unfortunate—the poor beloved child! And two big tears ran down the immovable cheeks of the old man.

Suddenly the vision disappeared; the meeting had been called to order. The Count opened his eyes and listened attentively to the speeches. It was with a strong voice that he uttered his: "I do!" which was followed by a prolonged murmur.

The whole assembly had turned towards him. Every one was looking at him with a painful surprise. And he, standing up but leaning with both hands on his desk, was so bent and so weak that they thought he was going to faint. Strange emotions shook him at times, and in the dim light of the lamps his face looked perfectly white.

He began to speak in a low tone; but, little by little, his enunciation became clearer, his voice stronger, and finally it filled the whole hall.

"We have been called together for a special purpose, gentlemen, and here we are. Now,

what is wanted of us? An admiration without reserve, or some advice? Applause, or discussion? Just now our President has dared to say, 'Approve first; by and by you shall discuss.' An imprudent speech—a strange invitation; and you have already declined it by your silence. But a silent protest is not enough for your honor. We are the advisors of the Empire; its good name is in peril; our cry, Halt! ought to go up to the Emperor. We ought not to commit the crime of complacency, and the grandeur of an assembly is shown in the manner it performs its duty. Gentlemen, let us do our duty!"

This solemn beginning was received with a growing agitation around the President; the Secretary of State alone trying to smilingly chat with his neighbor, as if absolutely unconcerned.

Count Besnard continued:

"So, then, they expect us to vote a law which they call one of general safety? They tell us France is ill—let us bleed her at the four limbs; gangrene is gaining ground; we, the pitiless doctors, must cut and slash without mercy! Gentlemen, in the days of Prairial in the second year of the Republic, so spake Robespierre——"

Some one interrupted him.

"No such comparisons, sir!"

The Count looked at the man who addressed

him so; it was one of the Ministers; then turning towards the platform where the members of the Government sat together:

"Yes, I understand," he said, "such a name sounds ill to your ears; let us look for some other, then. Two regimes that had their years of power have inspired you it seems, serving you as models, instead of lessons. Those were the inventors of exceptional laws, of pitiless proscriptions, the workers of vengeance and not of justice. In 1640 they were called the Stuarts—they disappeared; in 1815 their name was Bourbon—where are they now? It is well that they should have been smitten thus, because human blood is a too fruitful dew, a seed of hatred without pardon, of crimes without remorse! And then, it cries up to God, and God listens to it. Prynne is nailed to the post—but in his turn Charles I. mounts the scaffold! Marshal Ney falls pierced with bullets—and behold, Louvel rises armed with a knife! You have struck, you shall be stricken; you have caused tears to flow, you also shall have to shed tears. You have called together the Prevotal Courts, you have convened the Vincennes Court-martial. The retaliation in your case shall be named: Goritz; in yours, Saint Helena! *Patiens quia æternus.* And we, gentlemen, have we been truly just? No! In the melee of the second of December, what

use we have made of victory! What sad advantage we have taken of our strength! Unworthy victors, on the night of the battle, have we not finished our conquered foes? Remember all the exiles, all the transported! Remember ——"

"Remember, sir, your own doings!" cried an insolent voice.

The Minister of State had just risen, purple with rage. The two men glared at each other. Finally lowering his head,

"My doings?" the Count said, slowly. "Yes, yes, I remember them always—always. For the last seven years I have known what remorse means!"

The Minister cried out angrily:

"Such remorse ought to be hidden in solitude, sir!"

This time, the old man straightened up to his full height, and with a thundering voice replied:

"You ask for my resignation, Monsieur le Minister? You shall not get it. Dismiss me, if you dare! But before that, one word more. Formerly, in this very Council of State, a proud and honest man, if there ever was one, the Junior Portalis, was dismissed by an imperious gesture of the great Emperor. 'Out of here, sir, go out!' and he went. He bowed under the hand which had carried the flag of Arcole! But

I, before an insult which comes only from your mouth, I raise my head, and remain, and stand up to tell you, my colleagues: Reject this law; it is pernicious! Repulse it; it is infamous!"

Great confusion pervaded the hall. Everybody was interrupting, the meeting losing all its usual dignity. Never had such violence disturbed the independent calm of the Council. The President tried in vain to restore order and put a stop to such a scandal. So he addressed the speaker, saying:

"Have you finished, sir?"

Count Besnard, during the confusion, had dropped back into his armchair, his eyes closed, his arms hanging down, his head bowed as if in a swoon. A deathly pallor covered his face and revealed a fearful agony; but at these words, "Have you finished?" he rose again, and, gathering all his waning strength, he said:

"No! I have not yet said my say! But now I no longer address the Council; it is to my Sovereign that I want to appeal. Ah! pity, Sire, pity for yourself, and pity for your own blood. History reveals to us a formidable truth. In the family of kings, the child, too often, suffers for the crimes of his parents! Look at the last of the Valois, that miserable posterity of Catherine dei Medici, one after the other disappearing in imbecility, in insanity, in blood! And again, see in his cell, in the Tem-

ple, the expiatory victim of the religious persecutions perpetrated by his ancestors, and of the vices of his great-grandfather, Louis, the Dauphin of France, poor little Capet! O! pity, Sire, pity for your Prince Imperial! for the frail cradle filled with so much hope, watched over with so much love! He is our child, too, this son of France. Pity for him! Fear, lest you bring on this beloved head the future wrath of the Eternal! He is innocent: do not make him responsible! Do not prepare for us, some day, bewilderment and grief! May he never suffer for his father's, may he——"

Suddenly, the old man uttered a shriek; he staggered back, beat the air with his hands, and fell down with a crash. His face was frightfully convulsed, and a stream of blood ran out of his mouth.

Another outcry, uttered by the assembly, had answered his wail of distress.

"A doctor! Quick, a doctor."

Councilor Boudois, a learned and distinguished man, leaned over the body, tore off the garments, felt the heart, and in accents of terror exclaimed:

"He has broken a blood vessel!"

A mournful stillness reigned in the hall, every one hurrying around the dying man.

He did not move; and in the silence nothing was heard but the death rattle getting

weaker and weaker; life was slowly ebbing out.

Still, once he moved his head, and a few confused words came out of his lips.

"Marcel! you, too —— poor —— poor ——"

A heavy sigh, and the head fell back.

When the doctors arrived, everything was over. Count Brutus Besnard was dead, dying as he had prayed to die: stricken standing in a supreme battle for duty.

The God of Notre Dame, the Christ with the gentle smile, had not deceived him. He had taken mercy on him. He had given him the divine kiss of peace.

VIII

MISUNDERSTOOD SOBS

AND during that time, in the house of the Avenue de Breteuil, Marie-Anne was awaiting her father.

That day she had not gone out, preferring to remain alone with her melancholy thoughts. Sitting before her piano, making it sing, laugh and cry in turn under her clever fingers, she had for several hours lost herself in music and dreams. A certain melody, especially, the one she had formerly heard in Cornouailles, would come back again and again, monotonous and sad:

> To lie in a fine veil,
> The soft veil which surrounds us
> And clothes us in the earth;
> For to-morrow I shall be dead.

But suddenly she stopped and blushed.

Marcel had just entered.

Quickly the deformed girl left the piano. She turned around and, like a culprit caught in the act, she timidly looked at her brother, scarcely able to utter a few words.

"You! it is you! At last! At last!'

"Is my father back?" asked the young man in a hollow voice.

She did not answer at first; the sinister expression on his face scared her; however, she said:

"He was requested to call, this morning, upon the Prime Minister; but just now he must be at the Council; urgent business, no doubt on account of yesterday's event—you know, the attack on the Emperor!"

"I know," he said harshly; "I shall wait for him."

He took a seat, and bowed his head on his hands; Marie-Anne stood looking at him, trembling, and not daring to approach him.

He was the first to break the silence; now his voice was gentle, but his words solemn.

"Marie-Anne, an order from the Government obliges me to leave to-night, for a long indefinite journey. I came to ask pardon from my father for all the grief I have caused him. I am very much in need of his blessing!"

He stopped a moment; then, making an effort to smile:

"And you too, little Marie-Anne, if I have at times troubled your pious mind, your good, beautiful and saintly soul, pardon me, dear sister; pardon a sick man——"

She uttered a cry, and rushing to her brother, embraced him.

"Marcel! Oh! Marcel, why do you speak so? You hide some dreadful secret from us; you

are meditating some folly; you—oh! mon Dieu, he is going to do like our grandfather—he is going to kill himself for that woman! That woman!"

Roughly the young man pushed the poor girl away; his face again assumed its stern expression, he clinched his fists with rage:

"That woman? That woman! I know her no more!"

But the poor deformed girl fell on her knees by the desperate man.

"Do you speak the truth? If so, I, at last, bless God for his mercy! Why, then, do you stay away from us? Why this sudden departure? Remain, Oh! remain, I pray you! We will love you so much that your poor wounded heart will soon be cured! Remain, out of pity for me; I have suffered so much from your sufferings, cried so much when you cried! You know, Marcel, we are very much alike, and the same blood indeed flows in our veins. You do not care, do you, if I speak as I do? if I compare myself to you?—I so homely! No, do not tell me again that I am pretty; your eyes belie your language. I know myself too well. I am homely and deformed; a subject for scorn or raillery. I have only my voice in my favor, and you, naughty boy, never deign to listen to my singing! When I am dead —for I hope, I pray that I may die before you—

I wish that the organ of the church should play this Breton melody which we heard together at Audierne and which you said made one so sad. O! the sweet, the dear remembrances! Then, rocked by the sweet song, the heart of your poor Marie-Anne will stir in its coffin, and from it a sigh of affection may perhaps reach you; it will be the soul, yes, the whole soul of your poor little sister."

She said all this in a rambling way, interrupted by sobs and laughter. He was not listening to her, nor did he seem to see her; only, with a mechanical movement of the hand, he stroked the long hair of the girl kneeling before him, and thought of another.

At that moment the door opened gently, and the old Philomène entered discreetly.

"Mademoiselle, can you receive a caller? A lady would like to speak to you. She is in tears and seems to be beside herself with grief. She refuses to go and says she shall wait, if necessary, the return of the Count." And the servant handed her a card.

Marie-Anne took it and turned deathly pale.

"No! No! Call the servants! Put her out!"

But, almost at once, the door flew open, and a wild looking woman entered the room.

It was the Princess di Carpegna!

IX

THAT WOMAN

WHEN she perceived Marcel, the young woman uttered an exclamation of almost insane joy:

"He! He! Free! They have not killed him!"

And she ran towards her lover, as if to rush into his arms. A gesture from him stopped her short.

He had become fearfully pale; words choked him; he could not speak; one could see that if he had a knife within reach, he would kill her on the spot.

"You!" he stammered at last, "you here—What have you come for?"

Frightened at first by the explosion of his wrath she receded a few steps; soon, however, she advanced gently, caressingly and in the most innocent way possible, saying:

"What do I come here for, my friend? But—since you are free—I come to take you away with me."

A burst of laughter was the answer, a furious, insulting laugh.

"Enough! Stop this comedy! Leave this place!"

"No! No! No!" she repeated resolutely.

"Marie-Anne, darling," said Marcel, "I wish to speak to this woman; leave us alone a moment."

The young girl heeded him not. Standing in a corner of the room, she darted toward the intruder looks burning with hatred; at the same time studying her, analyzing her, comparing her with herself. And she thought:

"Yes, indeed, she is beautiful, this heart-breaker, with her wavy black hair, her large velvety eyes, her arched brows, her dark complexion and chiseled profile, her voluptuous shape, and the insolent ease of her whole person! Truly beautiful! though a wretch! And it is for the like of her that God has in store treasures of love and happiness! Oh!—And He is called a kind God—"

"Come! little sister, leave us alone," repeated Marcel impatiently. "There must be an end to this! In two words, I shall have settled with her!" And as the "little sister" appeared not to hear, he gently took her hand to lead her out of the room. Then, without any resistance, like a sick child obeying the gentle touch of its mother, Marie-Anne slowly crossed the room, once more looked at her brother, and went out.

"Now, Madame!" cried Marcel, standing be-

fore the Princess di Carpegna, "to begin with, let me say for the last time, what do you come here for?"

The young woman had quietly taken a seat, and even unhooked her traveling cloak.

"I told you already," she said, affecting the greatest ease; "since, against all hope, I find you again, I come to take you away with me—to elope with you ——"

She was looking at him with passionate love in her eyes. He raised his fist, but his hand fell at his side, and an ignominious appellation fell from his lips:

"You, harlot!"

Under the blow of the insult, she closed her eyes, and her face flushed a deep red. Then, very gently, she answered:

"Is it really you, Marcel, you who speak thus to me? Oh!"

Her voice was low and tender, her forehead bent, resigned to insult, her velvety eyes caressing the insulter. He drew back, ashamed of his degrading outburst.

A few minutes passed on in silence; and all the while she was fascinating him with her look and smile. Finally, she said, rising:

"Come, beloved, let us hurry! Yesterday, I was taken to the frontier, by the police, and forbidden to reënter Paris or France. Still, here I am! But, I am afraid lest they separate

us, for they must be on my track! Quick, quick, let us be off!"

She came nearer, as if to take hold of his arm and drag him away. He stood there, with his teeth firmly set together, his throat parched, the muscles of his face contracted, and his eyes flashing. Roughly his anger burst forth:

"Get out of here! go, I say! Don't you see that I am going to kill you?"

She slightly shrugged her shoulders, and, taking an armchair, sat down again.

"Kill me? What nonsense—when we are going to be happy forever! for I am free, my friend, free and truly a widow, this time——"

Bewildered in the presence of this resolute calm, Marcel could utter nothing but a new insult:

"Courtesan!"

This time, the young woman raised her head, and looking firmly at the man, said:

"All right, I accept the word! So you no longer want to have me for a wife? As you please! What do I care for what the fools or the envious may think. Only let us be together always, yes, always! Come, do not threaten me any more; I am not to be frightened; and please, do not laugh so; you grieve me!"

He was laughing indeed—an insane, hollow

laugh. He despised himself for not having yet grabbed her and thrown her out of the room.

It was indeed foolish to show so much weakness and patience, and to waste so much indignation upon such a consummate actress.

"Bravo!" he exclaimed sneeringly. "Well done, my lady! The day before yesterday, the drama; to-day, the pastorale! La Savelli can act every part!"

With one bound Madame di Carpegna was close to him.

"La Savelli! Yes! my name is La Savelli, now! Goodby to the society lady, the noble lady, the Princess! I am now La Savelli again! Be it so! I take back my name. I am proud of it! It is the name of an honest man, of a hero, of a martyr whom your Emperor and your father have murdered, and whom I was bent upon avenging!"

"You wretch!"

"No, say: you unfortunate! Yes, I was bent upon avenging this death which haunts me during the day, and, at night, shows me the bleeding wounds in his breast! Ah! to throw upon your Emperor the son of his Prosecutor General, and make them kill each other! To cause Count Besnard to shed as many and as cruel tears as I have shed! What a delightful dream! But, no, I have not had the strength; no, I have not been able to act my part to the

end! I have loved you cowardly, and I do love you, I love you, I love you!"

The words now flew out of her mouth, disconnected, but full of passion, both eloquent and commonplace. This passionate woman, appeared now what she truly was, both high and low born. And in her excitement, La Savelli was really superb. Confronting this anger, Marcel Besnard felt his own wrath little by little giving way to pity; he detested her yet—at least, he thought so—but he could not insult her any more.

"Do you not know that I truly adore you?" she said after a short pause; "for I know the whole story, my poor Marcel, yes, the whole of it! Marino—you remember Marino, the professor of music, alias Traventi; he has managed to escape over to Belgium—Marino told me in Brussels the abominable story of the bunch of wild roses. A snare from this Carpegna, my despicable husband! O! it was not I who sent it; upon my word it was not. And you, my poor simpleton, you were caught in the net. You loved me so much that as soon as you received the humble flowers from your Rosina, you went in quest of her. *Carino, mio carino!* Do you love me then so much? O! how happy that Traventi has made me! Come, you do not know the heart of your friend. I thought that you were in prison,

and I came to throw myself at your father's feet—he, the murderer of mine! It would have been ignominious, would it not? but I love you better than my filial honor! I wanted to see your judges. I would have saved you by accusing myself. Once free, Marcel, I would have taken you far away; if they had transported you, I would have followed you to the galleys; if they had sentenced you to die, I would have taken poison and died at the foot of your scaffold! I love you! I love you! Oh! how I love you!"

Carried away by her passion, she had seized her lover's arm.

"Come! let us go," she said for the third time.

He repulsed her again, but more feelingly.

"You must go back to Brussels alone, Madame. I remain; I am sentenced ——"

"Sentenced? What folly, when you are free, when you are here. When ——"

"To-morrow at this time I shall be dead."

"Dead! What a horrible word! You dead! How you say that! So calm, so resigned, so resolute, yet without anger. Oh! how you frighten me, Marcel. A minute ago you insulted me, you raised your fist to strike me, but I was very calm; the tremor of your voice contradicted the violence of your speech! But now—yes, I am really afraid. Come.

Say, are you trying to revenge yourself on me? Do you want to enjoy my terror to see how much I adore you? No, no; do not try me so, I pray you. Do not. Ah! don't you know that if you must die, I must die with you?"

"My life is no longer mine," said Marcel. "To avoid the degradation of having my name dragged into court, I have promised to kill myself before to-morrow—and I will do it. This is why I am at large."

She uttered a wild cry, and fell on her knees at his feet.

"Ah, mon Dieu! Ah! mon Dieu! I understand. And it is those bandits, the Ministers of Napoleon, who force you to do this—the rascals, the rascals! They are playing upon your honor, playing upon your father's honor! Yes, the rascals; and a hundred times more to be despised than we who tried to rid France of him and of them. But you shall not obey, Marcel. Oh! do not repulse me. Have pity. Pardon! Pardon! Wretch that I am, it is I who kill him. Yes, *perdita;* for I am the cause of his death. Pardon! Pardon!"

And her reproaches were intermixed with sobs and insults to herself. She had taken hold of him, and he, drawing back, dragged her on the floor. Suddenly, even roughly, Marcel raised her in his arms, kissed her wildly and cried:

"Come, I love you yet! Well, let us die together!"

It was getting dark. In this room where they embraced each other, the cold winter twilight, lengthening every shadow, made things appear huge and indistinct. He had an arm around her waist and her head rested on his shoulder. They were starting to go, when gently, Marcel freed himself.

Crossing the room, he went towards the armchair where his father usually sat; he religiously knelt down, and leaning his head on the faded tapestry addressed a prayer to the absent one, with his last good-by—

It was the very hour when, in the tumult of the Council chamber, Count Besnard was uttering his shriek of agony; the hour when his dying voice called his son and pardoned him.

Then the son and his mistress departed hand in hand.

X

AT HIGH TIDE

THAT night the wind suddenly began to blow from the northwest. It grew colder, and soon the gale forced into the channel the great tide of the Atlantic, and, from Cape Saint-Mathieu to the point of Gris-Nez, the coast of France was white with foam. The waves dashed upon the Norman coast with especial violence; whole rows of cliffs crumbled into the sea, and in Cayeux and the bay of the Somme the church bells continuously tolled for ships in distress. For a long time after, the women of Fecamp and of the two Saint-Valerys remembered that night of horrors which deprived them of husbands or sons.

The dawn was whitening the horizon; day-light was coming.

What a dawn! In the east a dim light, the uncertain gray of hanging snow; but over the furious sea, the immensity was dark. A thick, opaque mist extended to the horizon, and, under this veil, one could hear the raging sea bounding and falling with a frightful noise.

Already on land the *Angelus* was resounding. At the bottom of the hill of Sasseville, in the

wall which surrounded the park a gate opened, and two forms glided out in the shadow of the valley of the Dalles.

They were hurrying in the tempest towards the noisy ocean. Marcel Besnard was calm and kept silent; but Rosina di Carpegna was talking, as if to keep herself in a state of exaltation.

"Yes, you were right, my handsome lover, to choose such a grand bed to wash my sins in—the bed of the deep, deep ocean ——"

He smiled; and they walked on, hand in hand. At a turning of the road, they came into the center of the hurricane, and were soon covered with foam and salt.

Rosina stopped short:

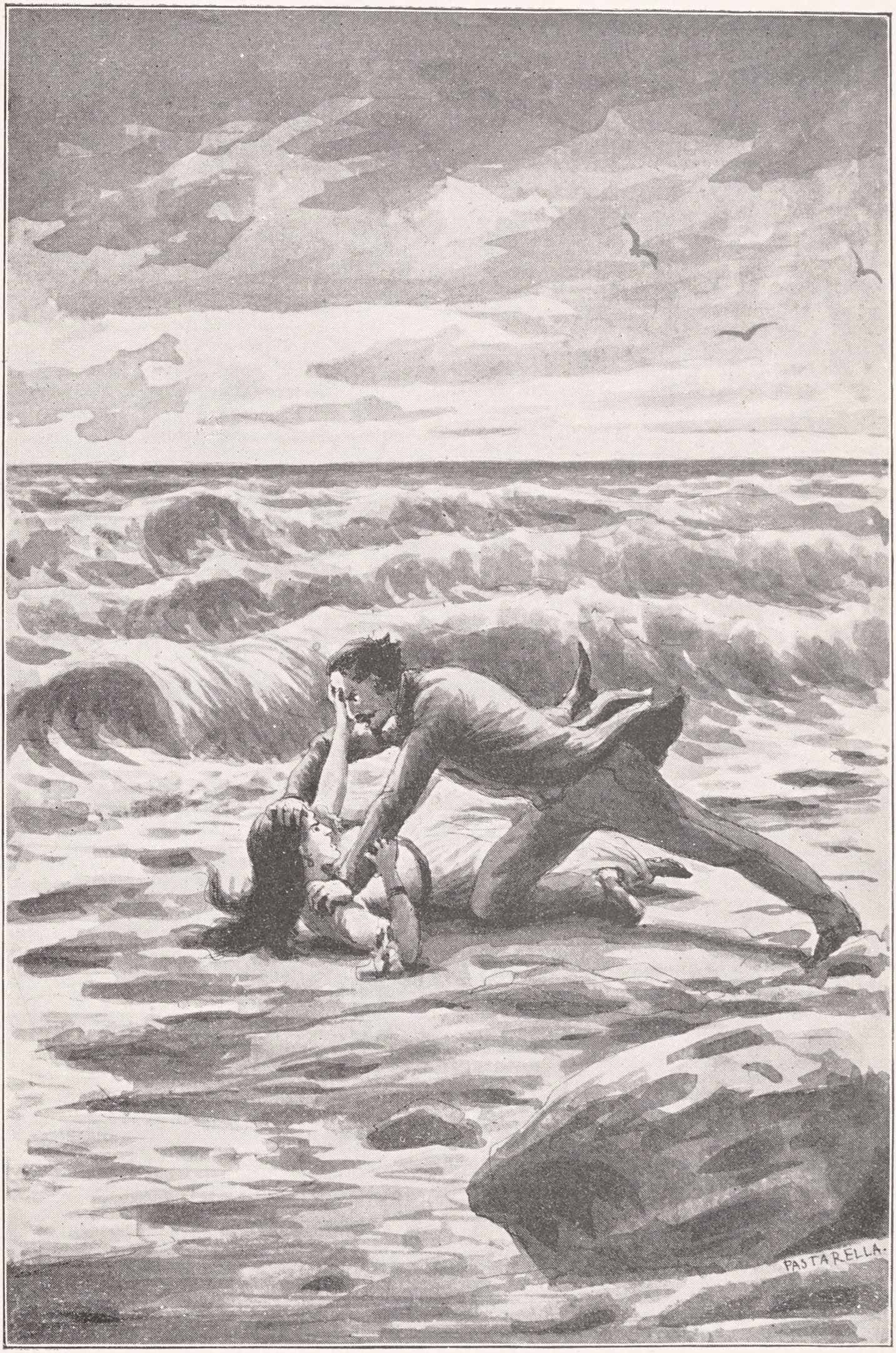
"Oh!" she said, in a strange tone, "how cold we shall be in there."

"In there" was the shroud she said she yearned for—the ocean.

They went on; but the woman more slowly; her feet were sluggish and her walk heavy; now, she also was silent.

Both reached the shore. Piles of broken rocks separated them from the beach; they went over them; then these companions in death reached the sand through pools of chilly water.

The tide was coming in; but far away yet, it was besieging a bank of reefs—the Catelet.


PASTARELLA

In the mist one could not see it; but it made itself heard; its great waves struck the obstacle with a thundering noise. Then, in the roaring of the tempest, there was a moment of calm, a groan, a sob and the noise would begin anew more terrific than ever.

The woman burst out laughing:

"Listen, my darling! The monster is calling us!"

She stooped down, picked up a stone, and with all her might, threw it at this howling thing.

Yes, indeed, it was calling, and with all the power of its ragged waves, crying under the torture inflicted by the hurricane. The light, clearer now, allowed the eye to distinguish something through the fog. And they could see stretched before them, in a semicircle, the enormous waves; greenish yellow, streaked with white like big, foamy mouths advancing threateningly. Whipped by the wind, the sea made tremendous efforts to overcome the obstacle formed by the reefs, and, bounding over, fell in white foam on their dark, ragged points, and then drew back whirling frightfully; the Catelet was fast disappearing. Already the waves rushed on the beach. A little while longer, and the abyss would be near them, above them——

Immovable, Rosina was looking on. Suddenly

she shivered all over. Her face turned deathly pale; her teeth chattered.

"How cold you are!" said Marcel, calmly and gently.

"No," she said, "I am afraid!"

He turned around to look at his companion. Yes, she was afraid. Her features were distorted, her cheeks cadaverous, her mouth wide open, her neck stretched stiff towards this advancing death. In the grey light of dawn, her terror-stricken face was hideous to behold.

Brusquely, the woman turned round and rushed toward the land. In a moment Marcel was by her side.

"Rosina! my Rosina! Have a little courage! Only a minute of anguish, and——"

"No, no, no!" she shrieked. "I will not! I cannot!"

He was now trying to take hold of her hand. She repulsed him wildly.

"I will not! I cannot! I do not love you enough for that!"

And again she started for land—for life.

With a few bounds he was again by her side.

"Ah! wretched woman," he cried, "cowardly heart! You *must* stay by me!"

He seized her arm, and, twisting her wrist, threw her down on the sand. She was fighting now, with almost superhuman strength, calling all the time for help.

"Help! Help! Murder! It is an abominable outrage! I do not belong to you! Help! Yes, it is an outrage! Leave me alone! Let me go! I do not love you! I have never loved you! Help!"

But all was in vain. The wind drowned her voice; no watchman was on the shore to hear her. Pale with rage and horror, Marcel held her down.

"You have never loved me, you say? The confession comes rather late, my beauty! Well, you are going to love me in Eternity!"

And with his knees on her breast, with both his clenched hands, he kept her head down in the frozen mud. She was tearing him with her nails and teeth, spitting in his face, insulting him.

"Wretch! wretch! Vile, despicable man! Son of an assassin! I tell you, I tell you, I *will* live!!"

She appeared now as she really was, a wholly abject, cowardly, despicable creature. Still she howled:

"A priest! Oh, a priest!"

In the face of death, the Italian woman was afraid of hell.

All of a sudden, the hands which held her down let go of their prey. Marcel Besnard arose, his eyes wide open as if trying to penetrate the unknown, his face with the expres-

sion of religious dread; and yet his lips were smiling.

He fell on his knees.

"Father," he whispered.

With one bound, La Savelli was on her feet; a second more and she was rushing towards the shore and climbing the steep cliff.

"Father! Oh, father!" repeated the prostrate son.

In the distance the fleeing form of Rosina was fast disappearing in the shadow of the valley and was soon lost in the morning mist.

Then the son of Count Besnard lay down on the beach very calm. Already the immense shroud was advancing towards him. He crossed his hands on his heart and remained perfectly still, waiting ——

What vision could have visited him at this dreadful hour, to make him pardon her for all the excruciating grief she had caused him? Perhaps, though, the sublime light, which, they say, appears resplendent before the eyes of dying men and allows them to gaze into eternity was now shining over him—he had fathomed the mystery of his expiatory love, and he accepted the expiation. Perhaps, also, in that unknown world, where life born of death peoples the Infinite; where the Invisible is looking at us, embracing us, suffering with all our sufferings, mingling its tears with ours, on the

threshold of immortality, the soul of the father was there to receive and comfort the soul of his child.

EPILOGUE

A FEW years ago, he who has just brought back to memory this lamentable story, was visiting the Insane Asylum at Bailleul, in Flanders. I was not the only one making this sad visit: there were two other persons there, both strangers to me, a man and a woman. Of the man, there is nothing to say; he was the conventional gentleman of leisure. The other, the woman, was showily dressed and berouged, and evidently belonged to the demi-monde; she had passed the years of youth. Doubtless one of those women whose ignominious triumphs prove but too well what our vaunted civilization is really worth—organized and conducted without God, and of course against Him.

A nun of the order of the Good Shepherd was guiding us around.

When we reached the quarters reserved for imbeciles, the woman asked:

"Is it not here that the daughter of Count Brutus Besnard is shut up?"

At these words, a poorly dressed creature crouching in a corner, rushed towards us, madly crying:

"It is she! Kill her! Kill her!" And the poor imbecile fell into frightful convulsions.

The woman, strangely enough, had grown very pale; she clung to the arm of her companion, and hurriedly went out—to her destiny.

THE END

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